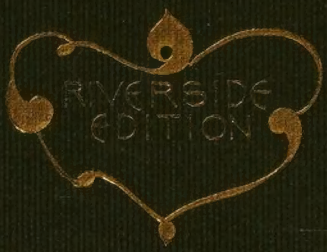
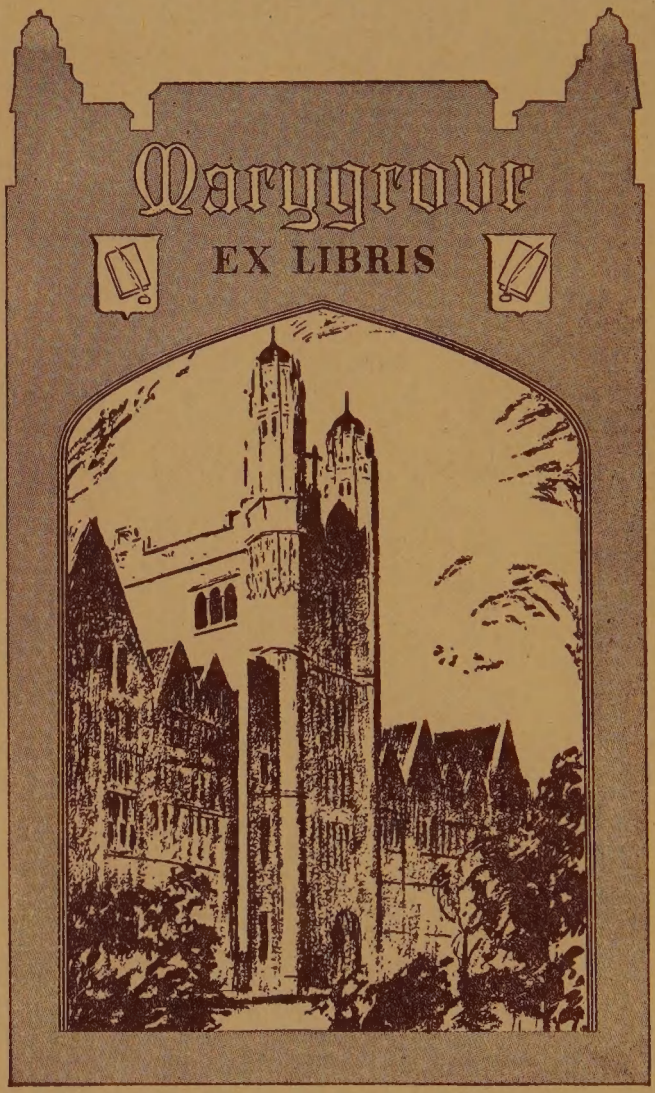
THE WRITINGS OF HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

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Riverside Edition

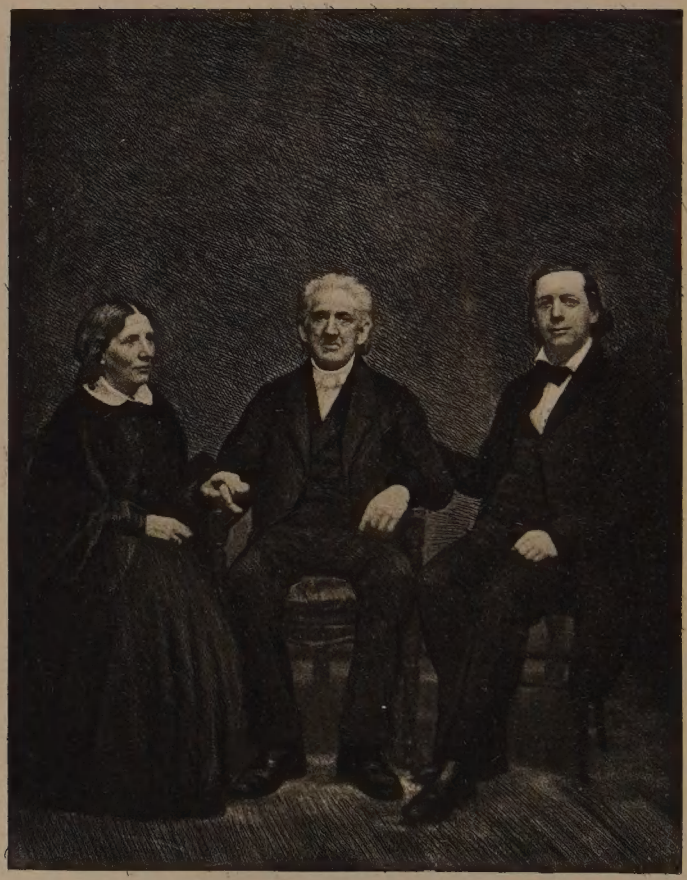
THE WRITINGS OF

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTIONS
PORTRAITS, AND OTHER
ILLUSTRATIONS

IN SIXTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME XI



The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe

Riverside Edition

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

POGANUC PEOPLE

Their Loves and Lives

AND

PINK AND WHITE TYRANNY

A SOCIETY NOVEL

BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
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CONTENTS

The frontispiece (Lyman Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, and Mrs. Stowe) is from a photograph taken in 1862.

The vignette (Mrs. Stowe's birthplace, Litchfield, Conn.) is from a drawing by Charles Copeland.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Poganuc People was the last of Mrs. Stowe's novels, and it may truly be said to have shown her genius flaring up at the end: she returned to early loves; she wrote with a glow of reminiscence. In December, 1876, she wrote from her Florida home to her son Charles: "I am again entangled in writing a serial, a thing I never meant to do again; but the story, begun for a mere Christmas brochure, grew so under my hands that I thought I might as well fill it out and make a book of it. It is the last thing of the kind I ever expect to do. In it I condense my recollections of a bygone era, that in which I was brought up, the ways and manners of which are now as nearly obsolete as the Old England of Dickens's stories is." And after the book was published she wrote to Dr. Holmes: "I sent *Poganuc People* to you and Mrs. Holmes as being among the few who know those old days. It is an extremely quiet story for these sensational days, when heaven and earth seem to be racked for a thrill; but as I get old I do love to think of those quiet, simple times, when there was not a poor person in the parish, and the changing glories of the year were the only spectacle."

Readers of Mrs. Stowe's personal reminiscences will recall the amusing account she gives of her early preference for the Church Catechism over the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, and not infrequently in her stories did she introduce contrasts and comparisons between the Congregational and the Episcopal order. She herself, when in

mature life, passed over from the former to the latter, and when she went to Florida to live she endeavored to persuade her brother Charles to take steps to enter the Episcopal ministry that he might aid her in extending the borders of that church in her new neighborhood. It is not surprising, therefore, to find the subject of church relations cropping out in this story, written when she was recalling early days, and reproducing in characters and scenes the movements of her own life.

Indeed, within the bounds of the novelist's art, *Poganuc People* has many autobiographic touches. In her own copy of the book, Mrs. Stowe pencilled a number of marginal notes, pointing out the basis of fact upon which certain passages rested, and even the personages who were disguised in name only. Thus she indicates that Colonel Davenport, the confidential friend of General Washington, in chapter vii, was Colonel Talmage; Israel Dennie, the distributer of Federal votes in chapter ix, was Sheriff Landon; and she noted against the conversation between Squire Dennie and Zeph Higgins, immediately following the introduction of the sheriff, "A true incident." That she had in mind her own father in the character of Dr. Cushing appears from her note at the last sentence of this chapter, "Father's own words," and "A true incident" against the pathetic passage after the defeat of the Federalists when Dr. Cushing gave vent to his feelings in his choice of the evening psalm. Again, in the description of the Poganuc parsonage, she wrote opposite the passage on page 122, "Description of Father's Litchfield study," and along the account of the adventures of the rats and the cat in the parsonage she drew an inclusive line and marked it, "Exact." "Exact," "My own experience" and "Litchfield" she wrote also over against the opening pages of the next chapter, "Spring and Summer come at last," and "My own childish experience" at the impression made

upon Dolly by Colonel Davenport's reading of the Declaration of Independence, in chapter xviii. "My experience" again she pencilled against the passage in chapter xix which described Dolly's household tasks, and the description of Poganuc River was a close copy of her own memory of Bantam River. Chapter xx narrates a chestnutting frolic, and Mrs. Stowe made the memorandum on it, "This whole chapter is drawn from the life;" and once more when she read over her twenty-first chapter she wrote: "All this story of the party happened to me; I never forgot it." Dolly's experience in going for wild strawberries, at the beginning of chapter xxvii, is marked, "From life," and "East Burying Ground, Litchfield," written against the description of the Poganuc graveyard in the same chapter. "Word for word fact" is her strong comment on page 208, and Miss Debby, in her first interview with Dolly at the close of chapter xxxv, is explained to be "Aunt Harriet Foote, exact." Clearly, those early days of visits to Nut Plains came vividly up to her sixty years later when she wrote this story.

Pink and White Tyranny was written five years earlier than *Poganuc People*, and her own attitude toward it is shown in the following brief address to the reader which introduced the book when it first appeared: —

"My dear Reader, — This story is not to be a novel, as the world understands the word; and we tell you so beforehand, lest you be in ill-humor by not finding what you expected. For if you have been told that your dinner is to be salmon and green peasé, and made up your mind to that bill of fare, and then, on coming to the table, find that it is beefsteak and tomatoes, you may be out of sorts; *not* because beefsteak and tomatoes are not respectable viands, but because they are not what you have made up your mind to enjoy.

"Now, a novel, in our days, is a three-story affair, — a complicated, complex, multiform composition, requiring no end of scenery, and *dramatis personæ*, and plot and plan, together with trap-doors, pitfalls, wonderful escapes, and thrilling dangers; and the scenes transport one all over the earth, — to England, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, and Kamtschatka. But this is a little commonplace history, all about one man and one woman, living straight along in one little prosaic town in New England. It is, moreover, a story with a moral; and for fear that you should n't find out exactly what the moral is, we shall adopt the plan of the painter who wrote under his pictures, 'This is a bear,' and 'This is a turtle-dove.' We shall tell you in the proper time succinctly just what the moral is, and send you off edified as if you had been hearing a sermon. So please to call this little sketch a parable, and wait for the exposition thereof."

POGANUC PEOPLE

CHAPTER I

DISSOLVING VIEWS

THE scene is a large, roomy, clean New England kitchen of some sixty years ago. There was the great wide fireplace, with its crane and array of pothooks; there was the tall black clock in the corner, ticking in response to the chirp of the crickets around the broad, flat stone hearth. The scoured tin and pewter on the dresser caught flickering gleams of brightness from the western sunbeams that shone through the network of elm boughs, rattling and tapping as the wind blew them against the window. It was not quite half past four o'clock, yet the December sun hung low and red in the western horizon, telling that the time of the shortest winter days was come. Everything in the ample room shone with whiteness and neatness; everything was ranged, put up, and in order, as if work were some past and bygone affair, hardly to be remembered. The only living figure in this picture of still life was that of a strapping, buxom Yankee maiden, with plump arms stripped to the elbow and hands plunged deep in the white, elastic cushion of puffy dough, which rose under them as she kneaded.

Apparently pleasant thoughts were her company in her solitude, for her round brown eyes twinkled with a pleased sparkle, and every now and then she broke into

fragments of psalmody, which she practiced over and over, and then nodded her head contentedly, as if satisfied that she had caught the tune.

Suddenly the outside door flew open and little Dolly Cushing burst into the kitchen, panting and breathless, her cheeks glowing with exercise in face of the keen winter wind.

In she came, noisy and busy, dropping her knitting-work and spelling-book in her eagerness, shutting the door behind her with a cheerful bang, and opening conversation without stopping to get her breath: —

"Oh, Nabby, Nabby! do tell me what they are doing up at your church. I 've seen 'em all day carrying armfuls and armfuls — ever so much — spruce and pine up that way, and Jim Brace and Tom Peters told me they were going to have a 'lumination there, and when I asked what a 'lumination was they only laughed at me and called me a Presbyterian. Don't you think it 's a shame, Nabby, that the big boys will laugh at me so and call me names, and won't tell me anything?"

"Oh, land o' Goshen, Dolly, what do you mind them boys for?" said Nabby; "boys is mostly hateful when girls is little; but we take our turn by and by," she said, with a complacent twinkle of her brown eyes. "I make them stand around, I bet ye, and you will when you get older."

"But, Nabby, what is a 'lumination?"

"Well, now, Dolly, you jest pick up your book, and put up your knittin'-work, and sweep out that snow you 've tracked in, and hang up your bonnet and cloak, and I 'll tell you all about it," said Nabby, taking up her whole cushion of dough and letting it down the other side with a great bound and beginning kneading again.

The little maiden speedily complied with all her requisitions and came and stood, eager and breathless, by the bread bowl.

And a very pretty picture she made there, with her rosy mouth just parted to show her little white teeth, and the afternoon sunshine glinting through the window brightness to go to the brown curls that hung over her round white forehead, her dark blue eyes kindling with eagerness and curiosity.

"Well, you see," said Nabby, "to-morrow 's Christmas; and they 've been dressin' the church with ground pine and spruce boughs, and made it just as beautiful as can be, and they 're goin' to have a great gold star over the chancel. General Lewis sent clear to Boston to get the things to make it of, and Miss Ida Lewis she made it; and to-night they 're going to 'luminate. They put a candle in every single pane of glass in that 'ere church, and it 'll be all just as light as day. When they get 'em all lighted up, you can see that 'ere church clear down to North Poganuc."

Now this sentence was a perfect labyrinth of mystery to Dolly; for she did not know what Christmas was, she did not know what the chancel was, she never saw anything dressed with pine, and she was wholly in the dark what it was all about; and yet her bosom heaved, her breath grew short, her color came and went, and she trembled with excitement. Something bright, beautiful, glorious, must be coming into her life, and oh, if she could only see it!

"Oh, Nabby, are you going?" she said, with quivering eagerness.

"Yes, I 'm goin' with Jim Sawin. I belong to the singers, and I 'm a-goin' early to practice on the anthem."

"Oh, Nabby, won't you take me? Do, Nabby!" said Dolly piteously.

"Oh, land o' Goshen! no, child; you must n't think on 't. I could n't do that noways. Your pa never would hear of it, nor Mis' Cushing neither. You see, your pa don't b'lieve in Christmas."

"What is Christmas, Nabby?"

"Why, it's the day Christ was born — that's Christmas."

"Why, my papa believes Christ was born," said Dolly, with an injured air; "you need n't tell me that he don't. I've heard him read all about it in the Testament."

"I did n't say he did n't, did I?" said Nabby; "but your papa ain't a 'Piscopal, and he don't believe in keeping none of them 'ere Prayer-Book days — Christmas, nor Easter, nor nothin'," said Nabby, with a generous profusion of negatives. "Up to the 'Piscopal church they keep Christmas, and they don't keep it down to your meetin'-house; that's the long and short on 't," and Nabby turned her batch of dough over with a final flounce, as if to emphasize the statement, and giving one last poke in the middle of the fair white cushion, she proceeded to rub the paste from her hands and to cover her completed batch with a clean white towel and then with a neat comforter of quilted cotton. Then, establishing it in the warmest corner of the fireplace, she proceeded to wash her hands and look at the clock and make other movements to show that the conversation had come to an end.

Poor little Dolly stood still, looking wistful and bewildered. The tangle of brown and golden curls on the outside of her little head was not more snarled than the conflicting ideas in the inside. This great and wonderful idea of Christmas, and all this confusion of images, of gold stars and green wreaths and illuminated windows and singing and music — all done because Christ was born, and yet something that her papa did not approve of — it was a hopeless puzzle. After standing thinking for a minute or two she resumed: —

"But, Nabby, *why* don't my papa like it? and why don't we have a 'lumination in our meeting-house?"

"Bless your heart, child, they never does them things

to Presbyterian meetin's. Folks' ways is different, and them 'ere is 'Piscopal ways. For my part I 'm glad father signed off to the 'Piscopalians, for it 's a great deal jollier."

"Oh, dear! my papa won't ever sign off," said Dolly mournfully.

"To be sure he won't. Why, what nonsense that is!" said Nabby, with that briskness with which grown people shake off the griefs of children. "Of course *he* won't when he 's a minister, so what 's the use of worryin'? You jest shet up now, for I 've got to hurry and get tea; 'cause your pa and ma are goin' over to the lecture to-night in North Poganuc schoolhouse and they 'll want their supper early."

Dolly still hung about wishfully.

"Nabby, if I should ask papa, and he *should* say I might go, would you take me?" said Dolly.

Now, Nabby was a good-natured soul enough and in a general way fond of children; she encouraged Miss Dolly's prattling visits to the kitchen, let her stand about surveying her in various domestic processes, and encouraged that free expression of opinion in conversation which in those days was entirely repressed on the part of juveniles in the presence of their elders. She was, in fact, fond of Dolly in a certain way, but not fond enough of her to interfere with the serious avocations of life; and Nabby was projecting very serious and delicate movements of diplomacy that night. She was going to the church with Jim Sawin, who was on the very verge of a declared admiration, not in the least because her heart inclined toward Jim, but as a means of bringing Ike Peters to capitulation in a quarrel of some weeks' standing. Jim Sawin's "folks," as she would have phrased it, were "meetin'ers," while Ike Peters was a leading member of the Episcopal choir, and it was designed expressly to aggravate him that she was to come in exhibiting her captive in triumph. To

have "a child round under her feet," while engaged in conducting affairs of such delicacy, was manifestly impossible — so impossible that she thought stern repression of any such idea the very best policy.

"Now, Dolly Cushing, you jest shet up — for 't ain't no use talkin'. Your pa nor your ma would n't hear on 't; and besides, little girls like you must go to bed early. They can't be up 'night-hawkin',' and goin' round in the cold. You might catch cold and die like little Julia Cavers. Little girls must be in bed and asleep by eight o'clock."

Dolly stood still with a lowering brow. Just then the world looked very dark. Her little rose leaf of an under lip rolled out and quivered, and large bright drops began falling one by one over her cheeks.

Nabby had a soft spot in her heart, and felt these signs of affliction; but she stood firm.

"Now, Dolly, I 'm sorry; but you can't go. So you jest be a good girl and not say no more about it, and don't cry, and I 'll tell you what I 'll do: I 'll buy you a sugar dog down to the store, and I 'll tell you all about it tomorrow."

Dolly had seen these sugar dogs in the window of the store, resplendent with their blue backs and yellow ears and pink tails — designed probably to represent dogs as they exist at the end of the rainbow. Her heart had burned within her with hopeless desire to call one of these beauties her own; and Nabby's promise brought out a gleaming smile through the showery atmosphere of her little face. A sugar dog might reconcile her to life.

"Now, you must promise me 'certain true as black is blue,'" said Nabby, adjuring by an apparently irrational form of conjuration in vogue among the children in those times. "You must promise you won't say a word about this 'ere thing to your pa or ma; for they would n't hear

of your goin', and if they would I should n't take you. I really could n't. It would be very inconvenient."

Dolly heaved a great sigh, but thought of the sugar dog, and calmed down the tempest that seemed struggling to rise in her little breast. A rainbow of hope rose over the cloud of disappointment, and a sugar dog with yellow ears and pink tail gleamed consolingly through it.

CHAPTER II

DOLLY

Our little Dolly was a late autumn chicken, the youngest of ten children, the nursing, rearing, and caring for whom had straitened the limited salary of Parson Cushing, of Poganuc Centre, and sorely worn on the nerves and strength of the good wife who plied the laboring oar in these performances.

It was Dolly's lot to enter the family at a period when babies were no longer a novelty, when the house was full of the wants and clamors of older children, and the mother at her very wits' end with a confusion of jackets and trousers, soap, candles, and groceries, and the endless harassments of making both ends meet which pertain to the lot of a poor country minister's wife. Consequently Dolly was disposed of as she grew up in all those shorthand methods by which children were taught to be the least possible trouble to their elders. She was taught to come when called, and do as she was bid without a question or argument, to be quenched in bed at the earliest possible hour at night, and to speak only when spoken to in the presence of her elders. All this was a dismal repression to Dolly, for she was by nature a lively, excitable little thing, bursting with questions that she longed to ask, and with comments and remarks that she burned to make, and so she escaped gladly to the kitchen where Nabby, the one hired girl, who was much in the same situation of repressed communicativeness, encouraged her conversational powers.

On the whole, although it never distinctly occurred to Dolly to murmur at her lot in life, yet at times she sighed over the dreadful insignificance of being only a little girl in a great family of grown-up people. For even Dolly's brothers nearest her own age were studying in the Academy and spouting scraps of superior Latin at her to make her stare and wonder at their learning. They were tearing, noisy, tempestuous boys, good natured enough and willing to pet her at intervals, but prompt to suggest that it was "time for Dolly to go to bed" when her questions or her gambols interfered with their evening pleasures.

Dolly was a robust, healthy little creature, never ailing in any way, and consequently received none of the petting which a more delicate child might have claimed, and the general course of her experience impressed her with the mournful conviction that she was always liable to be in the way — as she commonly was, with her childish curiosity, her burning desire to see and hear and know all that interested the grown people above her. Dolly sometimes felt her littleness and insignificance as quite a burden, and longed to be one of the grown-up people. *They* got civil answers when they asked questions, instead of being told not to talk, and they were not sent to bed the minute it was dark, no matter what pleasant things were going on about them. Once Dolly remembered to have had sore throat with fever. The doctor was sent for. Her mother put away all her work and held her in her arms. Her father came down out of his study and sat up rocking her nearly all night, and her noisy, roistering brothers came softly to her door and inquired how she was, and Dolly was only sorry that the cold passed off so soon, and she found herself healthy and insignificant as ever. Being gifted with an active fancy, she sometimes imagined a scene when she should be sick and die, and her father and mother and everybody would cry over her, and there would

be a funeral for her as there was for little Julia Cavers, one of her playmates. She could see no drawback to the interest of the scene except that she could not be there to enjoy her own funeral and see how much she was appreciated; so on the whole she turned her visions in another direction and fancied the time when she should be a grown woman and at liberty to do just as she pleased.

It must not be imagined, however, that Dolly had an unhappy childhood. Indeed, it may be questioned whether, if she had lived in our day when the parents often seem to be sitting at the feet of their children and humbly inquiring after their sovereign will and pleasure, she would have been much happier than she was. She could not have all she wanted, and the most petted child on earth cannot. She had learned to do without what she could not get, and to bear what she did not like; two sources of happiness and peace which we should judge to be unknown to many modern darlings. For the most part Dolly had learned to sail her own little boat wisely among the bigger and bustling crafts of the older generation.

There were no amusements then specially provided for children. There were no children's books; there were no Sunday-schools to teach bright little songs and to give children picnics and presents. It was a grown people's world, and not a child's world, that existed in those days. Even children's toys of the period were so poor and so few that, in comparison with our modern profusion, they could scarcely be said to exist.

Dolly, however, had her playthings, as every child of lively fancy will. Childhood is poetic and creative, and can make to itself toys out of nothing. Dolly had the range of the great woodpile in the back yard, where, at the yearly "wood-spell," the farmers deposited the fuel needed for the long, terrible winters, and that woodpile was a world of treasure to her. She skipped and sung

and climbed among its intricacies, and found there treasures of wonder. Green velvet mosses, little white trees of lichen that seemed to her to have tiny apples upon them, long gray-bearded mosses and fine scarlet cups and fairy caps she collected and treasured. She arranged landscapes of these, where green mosses made the fields, and little sprigs of spruce and ground pine the trees, and bits of broken glass imitated rivers and lakes, reflecting the overshadowing banks. She had, too, hoards of chestnuts and walnuts which a squirrel might have envied, picked up with her own hands from under the yellow autumn leaves; and she had — chief treasure of all — a wooden doll, with staring glass eyes, that had been sent her by her grandmother in Boston, which doll was the central point in all her arrangements. To her she showed the chestnuts and walnuts; she gave to her the jay's feathers and the bluebird's wing which the boys had given to her; she made her a bed of divers colors, and she made her a set of teacups out of the backbone of a codfish. She brushed and curled her hair till she took all the curl out of it, and washed all the paint off her cheeks in the zeal of motherly ablutions.

In fact, nobody suspected that Dolly was not the happiest of children, as she certainly was one of the busiest and healthiest, and when that evening her two brothers came in from the Academy, noisy and breezy, and tossed her up in their long arms, her laugh rung gay and loud, as if there were no such thing as disappointment in the world.

She pursed her mouth very tight for fear that she should let out something on the forbidden subject at the supper-table. But it was evident that nothing could be further from the mind of her papa, who, at intervals, was expounding to his wife the difference between natural and moral inability as drawn out in a pamphlet he was preparing to read at the next ministers' meeting — remarks some-

what interrupted by reproof to the boys for giggling at table and surreptitiously feeding Spring, the dog, in contravention of family rules.

It is not to be supposed that Will and Tom Cushing, though they were minister's boys, were not *au courant* in all that was going on noteworthy in the parish. In fact, they were fully versed in all the details of the projected ceremonies at the church and resolved to be in at the show, but maintained a judicious reticence as to their intentions lest, haply, they might be cut short by a positive interdict.

The Episcopal church at Poganuc Centre was of recent origin. It was a small, insignificant building compared with the great square three-decker of a meeting-house which occupied conspicuously the green in Poganuc Centre. The minister was not a man particularly gifted in any of those points of pulpit excellence which Dr. Cushing would be likely to appreciate, and the doctor had considered it hitherto too small and unimportant an affair to be worth even a combative notice; hence his ignorance and indifference to what was going on there. He had heard incidentally that they were dressing the church with pines and going to have a Christmas service, but he only murmured something about "*tolerabiles ineptiæ*" to the officious deacon who had called his attention to the fact. The remark, being in Latin, impressed the deacon with a sense of profound and hidden wisdom. The people of Poganuc Centre paid a man a salary for knowing more than they did, and they liked to have a scrap of Latin now and then to remind them of this fact. So the deacon solemnly informed all comers into the store who discussed recent movements that the doctor had his eyes open; he knew all about these doings and they should hear from him yet; the doctor had expressed his mind to him.

The doctor, in fact, was far more occupied with a certain

Dr. Pyncheon, whose views of moral inability he expected entirely to confound by the aforesaid treatise which he had been preparing.

So after supper the boys officiously harnessed and brought up the horse and sleigh destined to take their parents to North Poganuc schoolhouse, and saw them set off — listening to the last jingle of the sleigh-bells with undisguised satisfaction.

"Good! Now, Tom, let 's go up to the church and get the best places to see," exclaimed Bill.

"Oh, boys, are you going?" cried Dolly in a piteous voice. "Oh, do take me! Nabby 's going, and everybody, and I want to go."

"Oh, you must n't go; you 're a little girl and it 's your bedtime," said Tom and Bill, as with Spring barking at their heels they burst in a windy swoop of noise out of the house, boys and dog about equally intelligent as to what it was all about.

CHAPTER III

THE ILLUMINATION

BEFORE going further in our story we pause to give a brief answer to the queries that have risen in the minds of some who remember the old times in New England: How came there to be any Episcopalians or Episcopal church in a small Puritan town like Poganuc?

The Episcopal Church in New England in the early days was emphatically a root out of dry ground, with as little foothold in popular sympathy as one of those storm-driven junipers, that the east wind blows all aslant, has in the rocky ledges of Cape Cod. The soil, the climate, the atmosphere, the genius, and the history of the people were all against it. Its forms and ceremonies were all associated with the persecution which drove the Puritans out of England and left them no refuge but the rock-bound shores of America. It is true that in the time of Governor Winthrop the colony of Massachusetts appealed with affectionate professions to their Mother, the Church of England, and sought her sympathy and her prayers; but it is also unfortunately true that the forms of the Church of England were cultivated and maintained in New England by the very party whose intolerance and tyranny brought on the Revolutionary war.

All the oppressive governors of the colonies were Episcopalians, and in the Revolutionary struggle the Episcopal Church was very generally on the Tory side; hence, the New Englanders came to have an aversion to its graceful and beautiful ritual and forms for the same reason that the

free party in Spain and Italy now loathe the beauties of the Romish Church, as signs and symbols of tyranny and oppression.

Congregationalism — or, as it was then called by the common people, Presbyterianism — was the religion established by law in New England. It was the state church. Even in Boston in its colonial days, the King's Chapel and Old North were only dissenting churches, unrecognized by the state, but upheld by the patronage of the colonial governors who were sent over to them from England. For a long time after the Revolutionary war the old régime of the state church held undisputed sway in New England. There was the one meeting-house, the one minister, in every village. Every householder was taxed for the support of public worship, and stringent law and custom demanded of every one a personal attendance on Sunday at both services. If any defaulter failed to put in an appearance it was the minister's duty to call promptly on Monday and know the reason why. There was no place for differences of religious opinion. All that individualism which now raises a crop of various little churches in every country village was sternly suppressed. For many years only members of churches could be eligible to public offices; Sabbath-keeping was enforced with more than Mosaic strictness, and New England justified the sarcasm which said that they had left the Lords Bishops to be under the Lords Brethren. In those days if a sectarian meeting of Methodists or Baptists, or an unseemly gathering of any kind, seemed impending, the minister had only to put on his cocked hat, take his gold-headed cane, and march down the village street, leaving his prohibition at every house, and the thing was so done even as he commanded.

In the very nature of things such a state of society could not endure. The shock that separated the nation from a king and monarchy, the sense of freedom and in-

dependence, the hardihood of thought which led to the founding of a new civil republic, were fatal to all religious constraint. Even before the Revolutionary war there were independent spirits that chafed under the constraint of clerical supervision, and Ethan Allen advertised his farm and stock for sale, expressing his determination at any cost to get out of "this old holy State of Connecticut."

It was but a little while after the close of the war that established American independence that the revolution came which broke up the state church and gave to every man the liberty of "signing off," as it was called, to any denomination that pleased him. Hence arose through New England churches of all names. The nucleus of the Episcopal Church in any place was generally some two or three old families of ancestral traditions in its favor, who gladly welcomed to their fold any who, for various causes, were discontented with the standing order of things. Then, too, there came to them gentle spirits, cut and bleeding by the sharp crystals of doctrinal statement, and courting the balm of devotional liturgy and the cool shadowy indefiniteness of more æsthetic forms of worship. Also, any one that for any cause had a controversy with the dominant church took comfort in the power of "signing off" to another. In those days, to belong to no church was not respectable, but to sign off to the Episcopal Church was often a compromise that both gratified self-will and saved one's dignity; and having signed off, the new convert was obliged, for consistency's sake, to justify the step he had taken by doing his best to uphold the doctrine and worship of his chosen church.

The little edifice at Poganuc had been trimmed and arranged with taste and skill. For that matter, it would seem as if the wild woods of New England were filled with garlands and decorations already made and only waiting to be used in this graceful service. Under the tall spruces

the ground was all ruffled with the pretty wreaths of ground pine; the arbor vitæ, the spruce, the cedar, and juniper, with their balsamic breath, filled the aisles with a spicy fragrance. It was a cheaply built little church, in Gothic forms, with pointed windows and an arch over the chancel; and every arch was wreathed with green, and above the chancel glittered a great gold star, manufactured by Miss Ida Lewis out of pasteboard and gilt paper ordered in Boston. It was not gold, but it glittered, and the people that looked on it were not *blasé*, as everybody in our days is, with sight-seeing. The innocent rustic life of Poganuc had no pageants, no sights, no shows, except the eternal blazonry of nature; and therefore the people were prepared to be dazzled and delighted with a star cut out of gilt paper. There was bustling activity of boys and men in lighting the windows, and a general rush of the populace to get the best seats.

"Wal, now, this beats all!" said Hiel Jones the stage-driver, who had secured one of the best perches in the little gallery.

Hiel Jones, in virtue of his place on the high seat of the daily stage that drove through Poganuc Centre on the Boston turnpike, felt himself invested with a sort of grandeur as occupying a predominant position in society from whence he could look down on all its movements and interests. Everybody bowed to Hiel. Every housekeeper charged him with her bundle or commissioned him with her errand. Bright-eyed damsels smiled at him from windows as he drove up to house doors, and of all that was going on in Poganuc Centre, or any of the villages for twenty miles around, Hiel considered himself as a competent judge and critic. Therefore he came at an early hour and assumed a seat where he could not only survey the gathering congregation, but throw out from time to time a few suggestions on the lighting up and arrangements.

"Putty wal got up, this 'ere, for Poganuc Centre," he said to Job Peters, a rather heavy lad who had secured the place beside him.

"Putty wal, considerin'! Take care there, Siah Beers, ye 'll set them 'ere spruce boughs afire ef you ain't careful lightin' your candles; spruce boughs go like all natur' ef ye once start 'em. These 'ere things takes jedgment, Siah. Tell Ike Bissel there to h'ist his pole a leetle higher; he don't reach them 'ere top candles; what 's the feller thinkin' of? Look out, Jimmy! Ef ye let down that top winder it flares the candles, and they 'll gutter like thunder; better put it up."

When the church was satisfactorily lighted Hiel began his comments on the assembling audience: —

"There goes Squire Lewis and Mis' Lewis and old lady Lewis and Idy Lewis and the Lewis boys. On time, they be. Heads down — sayin' prayers, I s'pose! Folks don't do so t' our meetin'; but folks' ways is different. Bless my soul, ef there ain't old Zeph Higgins, lookin' like a last year's mullein stalk! I swow, ef the old critter hain't act'ally hitched up and come down with his hull team — wife and boys and yaller dog and all."

"Why, Zeph Higgins ain't 'Piscopal, is he?" said Job, who was less versed than Hiel in the gossip of the day.

"Lordy massy, yis! Hain't ye heard that Zeph 's signed off two months ago, and goin' in strong for the 'Piscopals?"

"Wal, that 'ere beats all," said his auditor. "Zeph is about the last timber I 'd expect to make a 'Piscopal of."

"Oh, lands! he ain't no more 'Piscopal than I be, Zeph Higgins ain't; he 's nothin' but a mad Presbyterian, like a good many o' the rest on 'em," said Hiel.

"Why, what 's he mad about?"

"Laws, it 's nothin' but that 'ere old business about them potatoes that Zeph traded to Deacon Dickenson a year ago.

Come to settle up, there was about five and sixpence that they could n't 'gree 'bout. Zeph, he said the deacon cheated him, and the deacon stood to it he was right; and they had it back and forth, and the deacon would n't give in, and Zeph would n't. And there they stood with their horns locked like two bulls in a pastur' lot. Wal, they had 'em up 'fore the church, and they was labored with — both sides. The deacon said, finally, he 'd pay the money for peace' sake, if Zeph would take back what he said 'bout his bein' a cheat and a liar; and Zeph he said he would n't take nothin' back; and then the church they suspended Zeph; and Zeph he signed off to the 'Piscopals."

"I want to know, now," said Job, with a satisfied air of dawning comprehension.

"Yis, sir, that 'ere 's the hull on 't. But I tell you, Zeph 's led the old deacon a dance. Zeph, ye see, is one o' them ropy, stringy fellers, jest like touchwood — once get 'em a-burnin' and they keep on a-burnin' night and day. Zeph really sot up nights a-hatin' the deacon, and contrivin' what he could do agin him. Finally, it come into his head that the deacon got his water from a spring on one of Zeph's high pastur' lots. The deacon had laid pipes himself and brought it 'cross lots down to his house. Wal, w'at does Zeph do, without sayin' a word to the deacon, but he takes up all the deacon's logs that carried the water 'cross his lot, and throwed 'em over the fence; and fust the deacon's wife knowed, she had n't a drop o' water to wash or cook with, or drink, nor nothin'. Deacon had to get all his water carted in barrels. Wal, they went to law 'bout it, and 't ain't settled yit; but Zeph he took Squire Lewis for his lawyer. Squire Lewis, ye see, he 's the great man to the 'Piscopal church. Folks say he putty much built this 'ere church."

"Wal, now," said Job, after an interval of meditation,

"I should n't think the 'Piscopals would n't get no gret advantage from them sort o' fellers."

"That 'ere 's jest what I was a-tellin' on 'em over to the store," said Hiel briskly. "Deacon Peasley, he was a-mournin' about it. Lordy massy, deacon, says I, don't you worry. If them 'Piscopalians has got Zeph Higgins in their camp — why, they 've bit off more 'n they can chaw, that 's all. They 'll find it out one o' these days — see if they don't."

"Wal, but Zeph's folks is putty nice folks, now," said Job.

"Oh — wal, yis — they be; don't say nothin' agin his folks. Mis' Higgins is a meek, marciful old body, kind o' heartbroken at leavin' Parson Cushing and her meetin'. Then there 's Nabby, and the boys. Wal, they sort o' like it — young folks goes in for new things. There 's Nabby over there now, come in with Jim Sawin. I believe she 's makin' a fool o' that 'ere fellow. Harnsom gal, Nabby is — knows it too — and sarves out the fellers. Maybe she 'll go through the wood and pick up a crooked stick 'fore she knows it. I 've sot up with Nabby myself; but laws, she ain't the only gal in the world — plenty on'em all 'round the lot."

"Why," exclaimed his neighbor, "if there ain't the minister's boys down there in that front slip!"

"Sartin; you may bet on Bill and Tom for bein' into the best seat whatever 's goin' on. Likely boys; wide awake they be! Bill there could drive stage as well as I can, only if I did n't hold on to him he 'd have us all to the darnation in five minutes. There 's the makin' of suthin' in that Bill. He 'll go strong to the Lord or to the devil one o' these days."

"Wal, what 's his father think of his bein' here?"

"Parson Cushing! Lordy massy, he don't know nothin' where they be. Met him and Mis' Cushing jinglin' over to the Friday evenin' prayer-meetin' to North Poganuc."

"Wal, now," said his neighbor, "ef there ain't Lucius Jenks down there and Mis' Jenks, and all his folks."

"Yis — yis, jes' so. They say Lucius is thinkin' of signin' off to the 'Piscopals to get the trade. He 's jest sot up store, and Deacon Dickenson 's got all the ground; but there 's the Lewises and the Copleys and the Danforths goes to the 'Piscopals, and they 's folks that lives well and uses lots of groceries. I should n't wonder ef Lucius should make a good thing on 't. Jenks ain't one that cares much which church he goes to, and, like enough, it don't make much difference to some folks."

"You know this 'ere minister they 've got here?" asked Job.

"Know him? Guess so!" said Hiel, with a superior smile. "I 've known Sim Coan ever since he wore short jackets. Sim comes from over by East Poganuc. His grand'ther was old Gineral Coan, a gret Tory he was, in the war times. Sim 's ben to college, and he 's putty smart and chipper. Come to heft him, though, he don't weigh much 'longside o' Parson Cushing. He 's got a good voice, and reads well; but come to a *sermon* — wal, ain't no gret heft in 't."

"Want to know," said his auditor.

"Yis," said Hiel, "but Sim 's almighty plucky. You 'd think now, comin' into this 'ere little bit of a church, right opposite Parson Cushing's great meetin'-house, and with the biggest part of folks goin' to meetin', that he 'd sing small at fust; but he don't. Lordy massy, no! He comes right out with it that Parson Cushing ain't no minister, and hain't got no right to preach, nor administer sacraments, nor nothin' — nor nobody else but him and his 'Piscopal folks, that 's been ordained by bishops. He gives it to 'em, hip and thigh, I tell you."

"That 'ere don't look reasonable," said Job, after a few minutes of profound reflection.

"Wal, Sim says this 'ere thing has come right stret down from the 'Postles — one ordainin' another in a steady string all the way down till it come to him. And Parson Cushing, he 's out in the cold, 'cause there hain't no bishop ordained him."

"Wal, I declare!" said the other. "I think that 'ere 's cheek."

"Ain't it, now?" said Hiel. "Now, for my part, I go for the man that does his work best. Here 's all our ministers round a-savin' sinners and convartin' souls, whether the 'Postles ordained 'em or not — that 's what ministers is *fur*. I 'll set Parson Cushing 'longside any minister — preachin' and teachin' and holdin' meetin's in Poganuc Centre, and North and South Poganuc, and gatherin' church members, and seein' to the schools, and keepin' everything a-goin'. That 'ere kind o' minister 's good enough for *me*."

"Then you 've no thoughts of signing off?"

"Not a bit on 't. My old mother, she thinks everything o' Parson Cushing. She 's a gret deal better jedge than I be o' this 'ere sort o' thing. I shall go to meetin' with mother."

"It 's sort o' takin' and pretty, though, this 'ere dressing up the church and all," said his neighbor.

"Wal, yis, *'t is* putty," said Hiel, looking around with an air of candid allowance, "but who 's going to pay for it all? These 'ere sort of things chalk up, ye know. All these 'ere taller candles ain't burnt out for nothing — somebody 's got to foot the bills."

"Wal, I like the orgin," said Job. "I wish we had an orgin to our meetin'."

"Dunno," said Hiel, loath to admit any superiority. "Wal, they would n't 'a' hed none ef it had n't been for Uncle Sol Peters. You know he 's kind o' crazy to sing, and he hain't got no ear, and no more voice 'n a sawmill,

and they would n't hev 'im in our singer seats, and so he went off to the 'Piscopals. And he bought an orgin right out and out, and paid for it, and put it in this church so that they 'd let him be in the singin'. You know they can make noise enough with an orgin to drown his voice."

"Wal, it was considerable for Uncle Sol to do — wa'n't it?" said Job.

"Laws, he 's an old bachelor, hain't got no wife and children to support, so I s'pose he may as well spend his money that way as any. Uncle Sol never could get any gal to hev him. There he is now, tryin' to get 'longside o' Nabby Higgins; but you 'll see he won't do it. She knows what she 's about. Now, for my part, I like our singin' up to the meetin'-house full as wal as this 'ere. I like good old-fashioned psalm tunes, with Ben Davis to lead — that 's the sort *I* like."

It will have been remarked that Hiel was one of that common class of Yankees who felt provided with a ready-made opinion of everything and every subject that could possibly be started, from stage-driving to apostolic succession, with a most comfortable opinion of the importance of his approbation and patronage.

When the house was filled and the evening service begun, Hiel looked down critically as the audience rose or sat down or bowed in the Creed. The tones of the small organ, leading the choral chant and somewhat covering the uncultured roughness of the voices in the choir, rose and filled the green arches with a solemn and plaintive sound, affecting many a heart that scarce could give a reason why. It was in truth a very sweet and beautiful service, and one calculated to make a thoughtful person regret that the Church of England had ever expelled the Puritan leaders from an inheritance of such lovely possibilities. When the minister's sermon appeared, however, it proved to be a spirited discourse on the obligation of keeping Christmas,

to which Hiel listened with pricked-up ears, evidently bristling with combativeness.

"Parson Cushing could knock that 'ere all to flinders; you see if he can't," said Hiel, the moment the concluding services allowed him space to speak his mind. "Wal, did ye see old Zeph a-gettin' up and a-settin' down in the wrong place, and tryin' to manage his Prayer-Book?" he said. "It 's worse than the militia drill — he never hits right. I hed to laugh to see him. Hulloa! if there ain't little Dolly down there in the corner, under them cedars. How come she out this time o' night? Guess Parson Cushing 'll hev to look out for this 'ere!"

CHAPTER IV

DOLLY'S ADVENTURE

And, after all, Dolly was there! Yes, she was. Human nature, which runs wild with the oldest of us at times, was too strong for poor little Dolly.

Can any of us look back to the earlier days of our mortal pilgrimage and remember the helpless sense of desolation and loneliness caused by being forced to go off to the stillness and darkness of a solitary bed far from all the beloved voices and employments and sights of life? Can we remember lying, hearing distant voices, and laughs of more fortunate, older people, and the opening and shutting of distant doors, that told of scenes of animation and interest from which we were excluded? How doleful sounded the tick of the clock, and how dismal was the darkness as sunshine faded from the window, leaving only a square of dusky dimness in place of daylight!

All who remember these will sympathize with Dolly, who was hustled off to bed by Nabby the minute supper was over, that she might have the decks clear for action.

"Now be a good girl; shut your eyes, and say your prayers, and go right to sleep," had been Nabby's parting injunction as she went out, closing the door after her.

The little head sunk into the pillow and Dolly recited her usual liturgy of "Our Father who art in Heaven," and "I pray God to bless my dear father and mother and all my dear friends and relations, and make me a good girl;" and ending with "Now I lay me down to sleep."

But sleep she could not. The wide, bright, wistful

blue eyes lay shining like two stars towards the fading light in the window, and the little ears were strained to catch every sound. She heard the shouts of Tom and Bill and the loud barking of Spring as they swept out of the door; and the sound went to her heart. Spring — her faithful attendant, the most loving and sympathetic of dogs, her friend and confidential counselor in many a solitary ramble — Spring had gone with the boys to see the sight, and left her alone. She began to pity herself and cry softly on her pillow. For a while she could hear Nabby's energetic movements below, washing up dishes, setting back chairs, and giving energetic thumps and bangs here and there, as her way was of producing order. But by and by that was all over, and she heard the loud shutting of the kitchen door and Nabby's voice chatting with her attendant as she went off to the scene of gayety.

In those simple, innocent days in New England villages nobody thought of locking house doors at night. There was in those times no idea either of tramps or burglars, and many a night in summer had Dolly lain awake and heard the voices of tree-toads and whippoorwills mingling with the whisper of leaves and the swaying of elm boughs, while the great outside door of the house lay broad open in the moonlight. But then this was when everybody was in the house and asleep, when the door of her parents' room stood open on the front hall, and she knew she could run to the paternal bed in a minute for protection. Now, however, she knew the house was empty. Everybody had gone out of it; and there is something fearful to a little lonely body in the possibilities of a great, empty house. She got up and opened her door, and the "tick-tock" of the old kitchen clock for a moment seemed like company; but pretty soon its ticking began to strike louder and louder with a nervous insistency on her ear, till the nerves quivered and vibrated, and she could n't go to sleep. She

lay and listened to all the noises outside. It was a still, clear, freezing night, when the least sound clinked with a metallic resonance. She heard the runners of sleighs squeaking and crunching over the frozen road, and the lively jingle of bells. They would come nearer, nearer, pass by the house, and go off in the distance. Those were the happy folks going to see the gold star and the Christmas greens in the church. The gold star, the Christmas greens, had all the more attraction from their vagueness. Dolly was a fanciful little creature, and the clear air and romantic scenery of a mountain town had fed her imagination. Stories she had never read, except those in the Bible and the "Pilgrim's Progress," but her very soul had vibrated with the descriptions of the celestial city — something vague, bright, glorious, lying beyond some dark river; and Nabby's rude account of what was going on in the church suggested those images.

Finally a bright thought popped into her little head. She could see the church from the front windows of the house; she would go there and look. In haste she sprang out of bed and dressed herself. It was sharp and freezing in the fireless chamber, but Dolly's blood had a racing, healthy tingle to it; she did n't mind cold. She wrapped her cloak around her and tied on her hood and ran to the front windows. There it was, to be sure — the little church with its sharp-pointed windows, every pane of which was sending streams of light across the glittering snow. There was a crowd around the door, and men and boys looking in at the windows. Dolly's soul was fired. But the elm boughs a little obstructed her vision; she thought she would go down and look at it from the yard. So downstairs she ran, but as she opened the door the sound of the chant rolled out into the darkness with a sweet and solemn sound: —

"Glory be to God on high; and on earth peace, good will towards men."

Dolly's soul was all aglow — her nerves tingled and vibrated; she thought of the bells ringing in the celestial city; she could no longer contain herself, but faster and faster the little hooded form scudded across the snowy plain and pushed in among the dark cluster of spectators at the door. All made way for the child; and in a moment, whether in the body or out she could not tell, Dolly was sitting in a little nook under a bower of spruce, gazing at the star and listening to the voices: —

"We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly King, God, the Father Almighty."

Her heart throbbed and beat; she trembled with a strange happiness and sat as one entranced till the music was over. Then came reading, the rustle and murmur of people kneeling, and then they all rose and there was the solemn buzz of voices repeating the Creed with a curious lulling sound to her ear. There was old Mr. Danforth with his spectacles on, reading with a pompous tone, as if to witness a good confession for the Church; and there was Squire Lewis and old Ma'am Lewis; and there was one place where they all bowed their heads and all the ladies made curtsies — all of which entertained her mightily.

When the sermon began Dolly got fast asleep, and slept as quietly as a pet lamb in a meadow, lying in a little warm roll back under the shadows of the spruces. She was so tired and so sound asleep that she did not wake when the service ended, lying serenely curled up, and having, perhaps, pleasant dreams. She might have had the fortunes of little Goody Two-Shoes, whose history was detailed in one of the few children's books then printed, had not two friends united to find her out.

Spring, who had got into the slip with the boys, and been an equally attentive and edified listener, after service

began a tour of investigation, dog-fashion, with his nose; for how could a minister's dog form a suitable judgment of any new procedure if he was repressed from the use of his own leading faculty? So Spring went round the church conscientiously, smelling at pew doors, smelling of the greens, smelling at the heels of gentlemen and ladies, till he came near the door of the church, when he suddenly smelt something which called for immediate attention, and he made a side dart into the thicket where Dolly was sleeping, and began licking her face and hands and pulling her dress, giving short barks occasionally, as if to say, "Come, Dolly, wake up!" At the same instant Hiel, who had seen her from the gallery, came down just as the little one was sitting up with a dazed, bewildered air.

"Why, Dolly, how came you out o' bed this time o' night! Don't ye know the nine o'clock bell 's jest rung?"

Dolly knew Hiel well enough — what child in the village did not! She reached up her little hands, saying in an apologetic fashion: —

"They were all gone away, and I was so lonesome!"

Hiel took her up in his long arms and carried her home, and was just entering the house door with her as the sleigh drove up with Parson Cushing and his wife.

"Wal, parson, your folks has all ben to the 'lumination — Nabby and Bill and Tom and Dolly here; found her all rolled up in a heap like a rabbit under the cedars."

"Why, Dolly Cushing!" exclaimed her mother. "What upon earth got you out of bed this time of night? You 'll catch your death o' cold."

"I was all alone," said Dolly, with a piteous bleat.

"Oh, there, there, wife; don't say a word," put in the parson. "Get her off to bed. Never mind, Dolly, don't you cry;" for Parson Cushing was a soft-hearted gentleman and could n't bear the sight of Dolly's quivering

under lip. So Dolly told her little story, how she had been promised a sugar dog by Nabby if she 'd be a good girl and go to sleep, and how she could n't go to sleep, and how she just went down to look from the yard, and how the music drew her right over.

"There, there," said Parson Cushing, "go to bed, Dolly; and if Nabby don't give you a sugar dog, I will. This Christmas dressing is all nonsense," he added, "but the child 's not to blame — it was natural."

CHAPTER V

DOLLY'S FIRST CHRISTMAS DAY

THE next morning found little Dolly's blue eyes wide open with all the wondering eagerness of a new idea. In those early times the life of childhood was much more in the imagination than now. Children were let alone, to think their own thoughts. There were no kindergartens to train the baby to play philosophically, and infuse a stealthy aroma of geometry and conic sections into the very toys of the nursery. Parents were not anxiously watching every dawning idea of the little mind to set it straight even before it was uttered; and there were then no newspapers or magazines with a special corner for the bright sayings of children.

Not that children were any less beloved, or motherhood a less holy thing. There were many women of deep hearts, who, like the "most blessed among women," kept all the sayings of their darlings and pondered them in their hearts; but it was not deemed edifying or useful to pay much apparent attention to these utterances and actions of the youthful pilgrim.

Children's inquiries were freely put off with the general answer that mamma was busy and they must not talk — that when they were grown up they would know all about these things, etc.; and so they lived apart from older people in their own little child-world of uninvaded ideas.

Dolly, therefore, had her wise thoughts about Christmas. She had been terribly frightened at first, when she was brought home from the church; but when her papa

kissed her and promised her a sugar dog she was quite sure that, whatever the unexplained mystery might be, he did not think the lovely scene of the night before a wicked one. And when Mrs. Cushing came and covered the little girl up warmly in bed, she only said to her, "Dolly, you must never get out of bed again at night after you are put there; you might have caught a dreadful cold and been sick and died, and then we should have lost our little Dolly." So Dolly promised quite readily to be good and lie still ever after, no matter what attractions might be on foot in the community.

Much was gained, however, and it was all clear gain; and forthwith the little fanciful head proceeded to make the most of it, thinking over every feature of the wonder. The child had a vibrating, musical organization, and the sway and rush of the chanting still sounded in her ears and reminded her of that wonderful story in the "Pilgrim's Progress," where the gate of the celestial city swung open, and there were voices that sung, "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him who sitteth on the throne." And then that wonderful star, that shone just as if it were a real star — how could it be! For Miss Ida Lewis, being a young lady of native artistic genius, had cut a little hole in the centre of her gilt paper star, behind which was placed a candle, so that it gave real light, in a way most astonishing to untaught eyes. In Dolly's simple view it verged on the supernatural — perhaps it was the very real star read about in the gospel story. Why not? Dolly was at the happy age when anything bright and heavenly seemed credible, and had the child-faith to which all things were possible. She had even seriously pondered at times the feasibility of walking some day to the end of the rainbow to look for the pot of gold which Nabby had credibly assured her was to be found there; and if at any time in her ramblings through

the wood a wolf had met her and opened a conversation, as in the case of Little Red Riding-Hood, she would have been noway surprised, but kept up her part of the interview with becoming spirit.

"I wish, my dear," said Mrs. Cushing, after they were retired to their room for the night, "that to-morrow morning you would read the account of the birth of Christ in St. Matthew, and give the children some good advice upon the proper way of keeping Christmas."

"Well, but you know we don't keep Christmas; nobody knows anything about Christmas," said the doctor.

"You know what I mean, my dear," replied his wife. "You know that my mother and her family do keep Christmas. I always heard of it when I was a child; and even now, though I have been out of the way of it so long, I cannot help a sort of kindly feeling towards these ways. I am not surprised at all that the children got drawn over to the service to-night. I think it 's the most natural thing in the world, and I know by experience just how attractive such things are. I should n't wonder if this Episcopal church should draw very seriously on your congregation; but I don't want it to begin by taking away our own children. Dolly is an inquisitive child; a child that thinks a good deal, and she 'll be asking all sorts of questions about the why and wherefore of what she has seen this evening."

"Oh yes, Dolly is a bright one. Dolly 's an uncommon child," said the doctor, who had a pardonable pride in his children — they being, in fact, the only worldly treasure that he was at all rich in. "And as to that little dress-up affair over there," he continued, "I don't think any real harm has been done as yet. I have my eyes open. I know all about it, and I shall straighten out this whole matter next Sunday," he said, with the comfortable certainty of a man in the habit of carrying his points.

"I don't feel so very sure of that," said his wife; "at the same time I should n't want anything like an open attack on the Episcopalians. . There are sincere good people of that way of thinking — my mother, for instance, is a saint on earth, and so is good old Madam Lewis. So pray be careful what you say."

"My dear, I have n't the least objection to their dressing their church and having a good Christian service any day in the year if they want to, but our people may just as well understand our own ground. I know that the Democrats are behind this new move, and they are just using this church to carry their own party purposes — to break up the standing order and put down all the laws that are left to protect religion and morals. They want to upset everything that our fathers came to New England to establish. But I 'm going to head this thing off in Poganuc. I shall write a sermon to-morrow, and settle matters."

Now, there is no religious organization in the world in its genius and history less likely to assimilate with a democratic movement than the Episcopal Church. It is essentially aristocratic in form, and, in New England, as we have already noticed, had always been on the side of monarchical institutions.

But just at this point in the history of New England affairs all the minor denominations were ready to join any party that promised to break the supremacy of the state church and give them a foothold.

It was the "Democratic party" of that day that broke up the exclusive laws in favor of the Congregational Church and consequently gained large accessions to their own standard. To use a brief phrase, all the *outs* were Democrats, and all the *ins* Federalists. But the Democratic party had, as always, its radical train. Not satisfied with wresting the sceptre from the hands of the Congrega-

tional clergyman, and giving equal rights and a fair field to other denominations, the cry was now to abolish all laws in any way protective of religious institutions, or restrictive of the fullest personal individualism; in short, the cry was for the liberty of every man to go to church or not, to keep the Sabbath or not, to support a minister or not, as seemed good and proper in his own eyes.

This was, in fact, the final outcome of things in New England, and experience has demonstrated that this wide and perfect freedom is the best way of preserving religion and morals. But it was not given to a clergyman in the day of Dr. Cushing, who had hitherto felt that a state ought to be like a well-governed school, under the minister for schoolmaster, to look on the movements of the Democratic party otherwise than as tending to destruction and anarchy. This new movement in the Episcopal Church he regarded as but a device by appeals to the senses — by scenic effects, illuminations, and music — to draw people off to an unspiritual and superficial form of religion, which, having once been the tool of monarchy and aristocracy, had now fallen into the hands of the far more dangerous democracy; and he determined to set the trumpet to his mouth on the following Sabbath, and warn the watchmen on the walls of Zion.

He rose up early, however, and proceeded to buy a sugar dog at the store of Lucius Jenks; and when Dolly came down to breakfast he called her to him and presented it, saying as he kissed her: —

"Papa gives you this, not because it is Christmas, but because he loves his little Dolly."

"But isn't it Christmas?" asked Dolly, with a puzzled air.

"No, child; nobody knows when Christ was born, and there is nothing in the Bible to tell us when to keep Christmas."

And then in family worship the doctor read the account of the birth of Christ and of the shepherds abiding in the fields who came at the call of the angels; and they sung the old hymn: —

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night."

"Now, children," he said when all was over, "you must be good children and go to school. If we are going to keep any day on account of the birth of Christ, the best way to keep it is by doing all our duties on that day better than any other. Your duty is to be good children, go to school, and mind your lessons."

Tom and Bill, who had been at the show the evening before and exhausted the capabilities of the scenic effects, were quite ready to fall in with their father's view of the matter. The candles were burnt out, the play over, for them, and forthwith they assumed to look down on the whole with the contempt of superior intelligence. As for Dolly, she put her little tongue advisedly to the back of her sugar dog and found that he was very sweet indeed — a most tempting little animal. She even went so far as to nibble off a bit of the green ground he stood on — yet resolved heroically not to eat him at once, but to make him last as long as possible. She wrapped him tenderly in cotton and took him to the school with her; and when her confidential friend, Bessie Lewis, displayed her Christmas gifts, Dolly had something on her side to show, though she shook her curly head wisely and informed Bessie in strict confidence that there was n't any such thing as Christmas, her papa had told her so — a heresy which Bessie forthwith reported when she went home at noon.

"Poor little Presbyterian — and did she say so?" asked gentle old Grandmamma Lewis. "Well, dear, you must n't blame her — she don't know any better. You bring the little thing in here to-night and I 'll give her a Christmas cooky. I 'm sorry for such children."

And so, after school, Dolly went in to see dear old Madam Lewis, who sat in her rocking-chair in the front parlor, where the fire was snapping behind great tall brass andirons and all the pictures were overshadowed with boughs of spruce and pine. Dolly gazed about her with awe and wonder. Over one of the pictures was suspended a cross of green with flowers of white everlasting.

"What is that for?" asked Dolly, pointing solemnly with her little forefinger, and speaking under her breath.

"Dear child, that is the picture of my poor boy who died — ever so many years ago. That is my cross — we have all one — to carry."

Dolly did not half understand these words, but she saw tears in the gentle old lady's eyes and was afraid to ask more. She accepted thankfully and with her nicest and best executed curtsy a Christmas cooky representing a good-sized fish, with fins all spread and pink sugar-plums for eyes, and went home marveling yet more about this mystery of Christmas.

As she was crossing the green to go home the Poganuc stage drove in, with Hiel seated on high, whipping up his horses to make them execute that grand *entrée* which was the glory of his daily existence. Now that the stage was on runners, and slipped noiselessly over the smooth frozen plain, Hiel cracked his whip more energetically and shouted louder, first to one horse and then to another, to make up for the loss of the rattling wheels; and he generally had the satisfaction of seeing all the women rushing distractedly to doors and windows, and imagined them saying, "There 's Hiel; the stage is in!"

"Hulloa, Dolly!" he called out, drawing up with a suddenness which threw the fore horses back upon their haunches. "I 've got a bundle for your folks. Want to ride? You may jest jump up here by me and I 'll take you round to your father's door;" and so Dolly reached

up her little red-mittened hand, and Hiel drew her up beside him.

"'Xpect ye want a bit of a ride, and I've got a bundle for Widder Badger, down on South Street, so I guess I'll go round that way to make it longer. I 'xpect this 'ere bundle is from some of your ma's folks in Boston — 'Piscopals they be, and keeps Christmas. Good-sized bundle 't is; reckon it 'll come handy in a good many ways."

So after finishing his detour, Hiel landed his little charge at the parsonage door.

"Reckon I 'll be over when I've put up my hosses," he said to Nabby when he handed down the bundle to her. "I hain't been to see ye much lately, Nabby, and I know you've been a-pinin' after me, but fact is" —

"Well, now, Hiel Jones, you jest shet up with your imperence," said Nabby, with flashing eyes; "you jest look out or you 'll get suthin'."

"I 'xpect to get a kiss when I come round to-night," said Hiel composedly. "Take care o' that 'ere bundle, now; mebbe there 's glass or crockery in 't."

"Hiel Jones," said Nabby, "don't give me none o' your saace, for I won't take it. Jim Sawin said last night you was the brassiest man he ever see. He said there was brass enough in your face to make a kettle of."

"You tell him there 's sap enough in his head to fill it, anyway," said Hiel. "Good-by, Nabby, I 'll come round this evenin'," and he drove away at a rattling pace, while Nabby, with flushed cheeks and snapping eyes, soliloquized: —

"Well, I hope he will come! I 'd jest like a chance to show him how little I care for him."

Meanwhile the bundle was soon opened, and contained a store of treasures: a smart little red dress and a pair of red shoes for Dolly, a half dozen pocket-handkerchiefs for Dr. Cushing, and "Robinson Crusoe" and "Sandford and

Merton," handsomely bound, for the boys, and a bonnet trimming for Mrs. Cushing. These were accompanied by a characteristic letter from Aunt Debby Kittery, opening as follows: —

DEAR SISTER, — Mother worries because she thinks you Presbyterians won't get any Christmas presents. I tell her it serves you right for being out of the true Church. However, this comes to give every one of you some of the crumbs which fall from the Church's table, and mother says she wishes you all a pious Christmas, which she thinks is better than a merry one. If I didn't lay violent hands on her she would use all our substance in riotous giving of Christmas presents to all the beggars and chimney-sweeps in Boston. She is in good health and talks daily of wanting to see you and the children; and I hope before long you will bring some of them, and come and make us a visit.

Your affectionate sister,

DEBBY KITTERY.

There was a scene of exultation and clamor in the parsonage as these presents were pulled out and discussed; and when all possible joy was procured from them in the sitting-room, the children rushed in a body into the kitchen and showed them to Nabby, calling on her to join their acclamations.

And then in the evening Hiel came in, and Nabby prosecuted her attacks upon him with great vigor and severity, actually carrying matters to such a length that she was obliged, as a matter of pure Christian charity, to "kiss and make up" with him at the end of the evening. Of course Hiel took away an accurate inventory of every article in the bundle, for the enlightenment of any of his particular female friends who had a curiosity to know

"what Mis' Cushin's folks sent her in that 'ere bundle from Boston."

On the whole, when Dolly had said her prayers that night and thought the matter over, she concluded that her Christmas Day had been quite a success.

CHAPTER VI

VILLAGE POLITICIANS

We have traced our little Dolly's fortunes, haps, and havings through Christmas Day, but we should not do justice to the situation did we not throw some light on the views and opinions of the Poganuc people upon this occasion.

The Episcopal church had been newly finished. There was held on this day, for the first time in open daylight, the full Christmas service. The illumination and services of the evening before had been skillfully designed to make an impression on the popular mind, and to draw in children and young people with all that floating populace who might be desirous of seeing or hearing some new things.

It had been a success. Such an audience had been drawn and such a sensation produced that on Christmas Day everybody in the village was talking of the church; and those who did not go ran to the windows to see who did go. A week-day church service other than a fast and thanksgiving and "preparatory lecture" was a striking novelty; and when the little bell rang out its peal and the congregation began to assemble, it was watched with curious eyes from many a house.

The day was a glorious one. The bright, cold sun made the icicles that adorned the fronts of all the houses glitter like the gems of Aladdin's palace, and a well-dressed company were seen coming up from various points of the village and thronging the portals of the church.

The little choir and their new organ rang out the Te Deum with hearty good will, and many ears for the first

time heard that glorious old heroic poem of the early Church. The waves of sound rolled across the green and smote on the unresponsive double row of windows of the old meeting-house, which seemed to stare back with a gaze of blank astonishment. The sound even floated into the store of Deacon Dickenson, and caused some of the hard-handed old farmers who were doing their trading there, with their sleds and loads of wood, to stop their discourse on turnips, eggs, and apple sauce, and listen. To them it bore the sound as of a challenge, the battle-cry of an opposing host that was rising up to dispute the ground with them; and so they listened with combative ears.

"Seem to be a-hevin' it all their own way over there, them 'Piscopals. Carryin' all before 'em," said one.

"How they are a-gettin' on!" said another.

"Yes," said Deacon Dickenson; "all the Democrats are j'inin' them, and goin' to make a gen'l push next 'lection. They 're goin' clean agin everything — Sunday laws and tiding-man and all."

"Wal," said Deacon Peasley, a meek, mournful little man, with a bald top to his head, "the Democrats are goin' to carry the state. I feel sure on 't."

"Good reason," said Tim Hawkins, a stout two-fisted farmer from one of the outlying farms. "The Democrats beat 'cause they 're allers up and dressed, and we Fed'lists ain't. Why, look at 'em to town meetin'! Democrats allers on time, every soul on 'em — rag, tag, and bobtail — rain or shine don't make no difference with them; but it takes a yoke of oxen to get a Fed'list out, and when you 've got him you 've got to set down on him to keep him. That 's just the diff'rence."

"Wal," said Deacon Peasley in a thin, querulous voice, "all this 'ere comes of extending the suffrage. Why, father says that when he was a young man there could n't nobody vote but good church members in regular standin',

and could n't nobody but them be elected to office. Now it 's just as you say, 'rag, tag, and bobtail' can vote, and you 'll see they 'll break up all our institutions. They 've got it so now that folks can sign off and go to meetin' anywhere, and next they 'll get it so they need n't go nowhere — that 's what 'll come next. There 's a lot of our young folks ben a-goin' to this 'ere 'lumination."

"Wal, I told Parson Cushing about that 'ere 'lumination last night," said Deacon Dickenson, "and he did n't seem to mind it. But I tell you he 'll hev to mind. Both his boys there, and little Dolly, too, runnin' over there after she was put to bed; he 'll hev to do somethin' to head this 'ere off."

"He 'll do it, too," said Tim Hawkins. "Parson Cushing knows what he 's about, and he 'll come out with a sarmon next Sunday, you see if he don't. There 's more in Parson Cushing's little finger than there is in that Sim Coan's hull body, if he did come right straight down from the 'Postles."

"I 've heard," said Deacon Peasley, "that Mis' Cushing's folks in Boston was 'Piscopal, and some thought mebbe she influenced the children."

"Oh, wal, Mis' Cushing, she did come from a 'Piscopal family," said Deacon Dickenson. "She was a Kittery, and her gran'ther, Israel Kittery, was a Tory in the war. Her folks used to go to the Old North in Boston, and they did n't like her marryin' Parson Cushing a grain; but when she married him, why, she *did* marry him. She married his work, and married all his 'pinions. And nobody can say she hain't been a good yokefellow; she 's kept up her end, Mis' Cushing has. No, there 's nobody ought to say nothin' agin Mis' Cushing."

"Wal, I s'pose we shall hear from the doctor next Sunday," said Hawkins. "He 'll speak out; his trumpet won't give an unsartin sound."

"I reely want ter know," said Deacon Peasley, "ef Zeph Higgins has reely come down with his folks to-day, givin' up a hull day's work! I should n't 'a' thought Zeph 'd 'a' done that for any meetin'."

"Oh laws, yis; Zeph 'll do anything he sets his will on, particular if it 's suthin' Mis' Higgins don't want to do — then Zeph 'll do it, sartin. I kind o' pity that 'ere woman," said Hawkins.

"Oh yis," said the deacon; "poor Mis' Higgins, she come to my wife reely mournin' when Zeph cut up so about them water-pipes, and says she, 'Mis' Dickenson, I 'd rather 'a' worked my fingers to the bone than this 'ere should 'a' happened; but I can't do nothin',' says she; 'he 's that sort that the more you say the more sot he gets,' says she. Wal, I don't wish the 'Piscopals no worse luck than to get Zeph Higgins, that 's all I 've got to say."

"Wal," said Tim Hawkins, "let 'em alone. Guess they 'll find out what he is when they come to pass the hat round. I expect keepin' up that 'ere meetin' 'll be drefful hard sleddin' yit — and they won't get nothin' out o' Zeph. Zeph 's as tight as the bark of a tree."

"Wonder if that 'ere buildin' 's paid fer? Hiel Jones says there 's a consid'able debt on 't yit," said Deacon Peasley, "and Hiel gen'ally knows."

"Don't doubt on 't," said Deacon Dickenson. "Squire Lewis he 's in for the biggest part on 't, and he 's got money through his wife. She was one of them rich Winthrops up to Boston. The squire has gone off now to Lucius Jenks's store, and so has Colonel Danforth and a lot more of the biggest on 'em. I told Hiel I did n't mind so long as I kep' Colonel Davenport and Judge Belcher and Judge Peters and Sheriff Dennie. I have a good many more aristocracy than he hez."

"For my part I don't care so very much for these 'ere

Town Hill aristocracy," said Tim Hawkins. "They live here in their gret houses and are so proud they think it 's a favor to speak to a farmer in his blue linsey shirt a-drivin' his team. I don't want none on 'em lookin' down on me. I am as good as they be; and I guess you make as much in your trade by the farmers out on the hills as you do by the rich folks here in town."

"Oh yis, sartin," said Deacon Dickenson, making haste to propitiate. "I don't want no better trade than I get out your way, Mr. Hawkins. I 'd rather see your sled a-standin' front o' my door than the finest carriage any of 'em drives. I hain't forgot Parson Cushing's sarmon to the farmers, 'The king himself is sarved by the field.' "

"I tell you that was a sarmon!" said Hawkins. "We folks in our neighborhood all subscribed to get it printed, and I read it over once a month, Sundays. Parson Cushing 's a good farmer himself. He can turn in and plough or hoe or mow, and do as good a day's work as I can, if he does know Latin and Greek; and he and Mis' Cushing they come over and visit round 'mong us quite as sociable as with them Town Hill folks. I 'm jest a-waitin' to hear him give it to them 'ere 'Piscopals next Sunday. He 'll sarve out the Democrats — the doctor will."

"Wal," said Deacon Dickenson, "I don't think the doctor hed reely got waked up when I spoke to him 'bout that 'lumination, but I guess his eyes are open now, and the doctor 's one o' that sort that 's wide awake when he is awake. He 'll do suthin' o' Sunday."

CHAPTER VII

THE DOCTOR'S SERMON

POGANUC was a pretty mountain town in Connecticut. It was a county seat, and therefore of some considerable importance in the vicinity. It boasted its share of public buildings — the great meeting-house that occupied the central position of the village green, the tavern where the weekly stage put up, a court house, a jail, and other defenses of public morals, besides the recently added Episcopal church.

It was also the residence of some stately and dignified families of comfortable means and traditions of ancestral importance. Of these, as before stated, a few had availed themselves of the loosening of old bonds and founded an Episcopal church; but it must not be supposed that there was any lack of dignified and wealthy old families in the primitive historic church of Poganuc, which had so long borne undisputed sway in the vicinity. There were the fine old residences of Judge Gridley and Judge Belcher adorning the principal streets. Conspicuous in one of the front pews of the meeting-house might be seen every Sunday the stately form of Colonel Davenport, who had been a confidential friend of General Washington and an active commander during the Revolutionary war, and who inspired awe among the townspeople by his military antecedents. There might be seen, too, the governor of the state and the high sheriff of Poganuc County, with one Mr. Israel Deyter, a retired New York merchant, gifted, in popular belief, with great riches. In short, the meeting-house,

for a country town, had no small amount of wealth, importance, and gentility. Besides these residents, who encamped about the green and on the main street, was an outlying farming population extending for miles around, whose wagons conveying their well-dressed wives, stalwart sons, and blooming daughters poured in from all quarters, punctual as a clock to the ringing of the second bell every Sunday morning.

Not the least attentive listeners or shrewd critics were to be found in these hardy yeomanry who scanned severely all that they paid for, whether temporal or spiritual. As may have been noticed from the conversation at Deacon Dickenson's store, Dr. Cushing had rather a delicate rôle to maintain in holding in unity the aristocracy and the democracy of his parish; for in those days people of well-born, well-bred families had a certain traditional stateliness and punctiliousness which were apt to be considered as pride by the laboring democracy, and the doctor, as might be expected, found it often more difficult to combat pride in homespun than pride in velvet — perhaps having no very brilliant success in either case.

The next Sunday was one of high expectation. Everybody was on tiptoe to hear what "our minister" would have to say.

The meeting-house of Poganuc was one of those square, bald, unsentimental structures of which but few specimens have come down to us from old times. The pattern of those ancient edifices was said to be derived from Holland, where the Puritans were sheltered before they came to these shores. At all events, they were a marked departure in every respect from all particulars which might remind one of the graceful ecclesiastical architecture and customs of the Church of England. They were wide, roomy, and of a desolate plainness; hot and sunny in summer, with their staring rows of windows, and in winter cold enough

in some cases even to freeze the eucharistic wine at the communion.

It was with great conflict of opinion and much difficulty that the people of Poganuc had advanced so far in the ways of modern improvement as to be willing to have a large box stove set up in the middle of the broad aisle, with a length of black pipe extending through the house, whereby the severity of winter sanctuary performances should be somewhat abated. It is on record that, when the proposal was made in town meeting to introduce this luxurious indulgence, the zeal of old Zeph Higgins was aroused, and he rose and gave vent to his feelings in a protest: —

"Fire? Fire? A fire in the house o' God? I never heard on 't. I never heard o' hevin' fire in a meetin'-house."

Sheriff Dennie here rose, and inquired whether Mrs. Higgins did not bring a foot-stove with fire in it into the house of God every Sunday.

It was an undeniable fact that not only Mrs. Higgins but every respectable matron and mother of a family brought her foot-stove to church well filled with good, solid, hickory coals, and that the passing of this little ark of mercy from one frozen pair of feet to another was among the silent motherly ministries which varied the hours of service.

So the precedent of the foot-stove carried the box-stove into the broad aisle of the meeting-house, whereby the air was so moderated that the minister's breath did not freeze into visible clouds of vapor while speaking, and the beards and whiskers of the brethren were no longer coated with frost during service time.

Yet Poganuc was a place where winter stood for something. The hill, like all hills in our dear New England, though beautiful for situation in summer, was a howling desolation for about six months of the year, sealed down

under snow and drifted over by winds that pierced like knives and seemed to search every fibre of one's garments, so that the thickest clothing was no protection.

The Sunday in question was one of those many when the thermometer stood any number of degrees below zero; the air clear, keen, and cutting; and the bright, blooming faces of the girls in the singers' seat bore token of the frosty wind they had encountered. All was animation through the church; and Mr. Benjamin Davis, the leader of the singing, had selected old "Denmark" as a proper tune for opening the parallels between them and the opposing forces of ritualism. Ben had a high conceit of his own vocal powers, and had been heard to express himself contemptuously of the new Episcopal organ. He had been to Dr. Cushing with suggestions as to the tunes that the singers wanted, to keep up the reputation of their "meetin'-house." So after "Denmark" came old "Majesty," and Ben so bestirred himself beating time and roaring, first to treble and then to counter and then to bass, and all the singers poured forth their voices with such ringing good will, that everybody felt sure they were better than any Episcopal organ in the world.

And as there is a place for all things in this great world of ours, so there was in its time and day a place and a style for Puritan music. If there were pathos and power and solemn splendor in the rhythmic movement of the churchly chants, there was a grand wild freedom, an energy of motion, in the old "fuguing" tunes of that day that well expressed the heart of a people courageous in combat and unshaken in endurance. The Church chant is like the measured motion of the mighty sea in calm weather, but those old fuguing tunes were like that same ocean aroused by stormy winds, when deep calleth unto deep in tempestuous confusion, out of which at last is evolved union and harmony. It was a music suggestive of the strife, the

commotion, the battle-cries of a transition period of society, struggling onward toward dimly seen ideals of peace and order. Whatever the trained musician might say of such a tune as old "Majesty," no person of imagination and sensibility could ever hear it well rendered by a large choir without deep emotion. And when back and forth from every side of the church came the different parts shouting: —

> "On cherubim and seraphim
> Full royally he rode,
> And on the wings of mighty winds
> Came flying all abroad" —

there went a stir and a thrill through many a stern and hard nature, until the tempest cleared off in the words: —

> "He sat serene upon the floods,
> Their fury to restrain,
> And he, as sovereign Lord and King,
> For evermore shall reign."

And when the doctor rose to his sermon the music had done its work on his audience, in exalting their mood to listen with sympathetic ears to whatever he might have to say.

When he spread out his sermon before him there was a rustle all over the house, as of people composing themselves to give the strictest attention.

He announced his text from Galatians iv. 9–11: —

"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

The very announcement of the text seemed to bring out upon the listening faces of the audience a sympathetic gleam. Hard, weather-beaten countenances showed it, as when a sunbeam passes over points of rocks.

What was to come of such a text was plain to be seen. The yoke of bondage from which Puritan New England had escaped across the waters of a stormy sea, the liberty in Christ which they had won in this new untrodden land, made theirs by prayers and toils and tears and sacrifice, for which they had just fought through a tedious and bloody war — there was enough in all these remembrances to evoke a strain of heartfelt eloquence which would awaken a response in every heart.

Then the doctor began his investigations of Christmas; and here his sermon bristled with quotations in good Greek and Latin, which he could not deny himself the pleasure of quoting in the original as well as in the translation. But the triumphant point in his argument was founded on a passage in Clemens Alexandrinus, who, writing at the close of the second century, speaks of the date of Christ's birth as an unimportant and unsettled point. "There are some," says the Father, "who over-curiously assign not only the year but the day of our Saviour's birth, which they say was the 25th of Pachon, or the 20th of May."

The doctor had exulted in the finding of this passage as one that findeth much spoil, and he proceeded to make the most of it in showing that the modern keeping of Christmas was so far unknown in the earliest ages of the Church that even the day was a matter of uncertainty.

Now it is true that his audience, more than half of them, did not know who Clement was. Even the judges, men of culture and learning, and the teacher at the Academy, professionally familiar with Greek, had only the vaguest recollection of a Christian Father who had lived some time in the primitive ages; the rest of the congregation, men and women, only knew that their minister was a learned man and were triumphant at this new proof of it.

The doctor used his point so as to make it skillfully exciting to the strong, practical, matter-of-fact element

which underlies New England life. "If it had been important for us to keep Christmas," he said, "certainly the date would not have been left in uncertainty. We find no traces in the New Testament of any such observance; we never read of Christmas as kept by the Apostles and their followers; and it appears that it was some centuries after Christ before such an observance was heard of at all." In fact, the doctor said that the keeping of the 25th of December as Christmas did not obtain till after the fourth century, and then it was appointed to take the place of an old heathen festival, the *natalis solis invicti;* and here the doctor rained down names and authorities and quotations establishing conflicting suppositions till the wilderness of learning grew so wild that only the Academy teacher seemed able to follow it through. He indeed sat up and nodded intelligently from point to point, feeling that the eyes of scholars might be upon him, and that it was well never to be caught napping in matters like these.

The last point of the doctor's sermon consisted in historical statements and quotations concerning the various abuses to which the celebration of the Christmas festival had given rise, from the days of Augustine and Chrysostom down to those of the Charleses and Jameses of England, in all of which he had free course and was glorified; since under that head there are many things more true than edifying that might be recounted.

He alluded to the persecutions which had forced upon our fathers the alternative of conforming to burdensome and unspiritual rites and ceremonies or of flying from their native land and all they held dear; he quoted from St. Paul the passage about false brethren who came in privily to spy out our liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us again into bondage — "to whom" (and here the doctor grew emphatic and thumped the pulpit cushion) "we gave place by subjection not for an hour."

The sermon ended with a stirring appeal to walk in the good old ways, to resist all those, however fair their pretenses, who sought to remove the old landmarks and repeal the just laws and rules that had come down from the Fathers. It was evident from the enkindled faces in every pew that the doctor carried his audience fully with him; and when in the closing petition he prayed to the Lord that "our judges might be as at the first, and our counselors as at the beginning," everybody felt sure that he was thinking of the next election, and Tim Hawkins with difficulty restrained himself from giving a poke of the elbow to a neighbor in the next pew suspected of Democratic proclivities.

As to Dolly, who as a babe of grace was duly brought to church every Sunday, her meditations were of a very confused order. Since the gift of her red dress and red shoes and the well-remembered delightful scene at the church on Christmas Eve, Christmas had been an interesting and beautiful mystery to her mind; a sort of illuminated mist, now appearing and now disappearing.

Sometimes when her father in his sermon pronounced the word "Christmas" in emphatic tones, she fixed her great blue eyes seriously upon him and wondered what he could be saying; but when Greek and Latin quotations began to rain thick and fast she turned to Spring, who, as a good, well-trained minister's dog, was allowed to go to meeting with his betters, and whose serious and edified air was a pattern to Dolly and the boys.

When she was cold — a very common experience in those windy pews — she nestled close to Spring and put her arms around his neck, and sometimes dropped asleep on his back. Those sanctuary naps were a generally accorded privilege to the babes of the church, who could not be expected to digest the strong meat of the elders.

Dolly had one comfort of which nothing could deprive

her; she had been allowed to wear her new red dress and red shoes. It is true the dress was covered up under a dark, stout little woolen coat, and the red shoes quenched in the shade of a pair of socks designed to protect her feet from freezing; but at intervals Dolly pulled open her little coat and looked at the red dress, and felt warmer for it, and thought whether there was any such day as Christmas or not it was a nice thing for little girls to have aunties and grandmas who believed in it, and sent them pretty things in consequence.

When the audience broke up and the doctor came down from the pulpit, he was congratulated on his sermon as a masterpiece. Indeed, he had the success that a man has always when he proves to an audience that they are in the right in their previous opinions.

The general opinion, from Colonel Davenport and Sheriff Dennie down to Tim Hawkins and the farmers of the vicinity, was that the doctor's sermon ought to be printed by subscription, and the suggestion was left to be talked over in various circles for the ensuing week.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. COAN ANSWERS THE DOCTOR

THE doctor's sermon had the usual effect of controversial sermons — it convinced everybody that was convinced before and strengthened those who before were strong. Everybody was talking of it. The farmers as they drove their oxen stepped with a vigorous air, like men that were not going to be brought under any yoke of bondage. Old ladies in their tea-drinkings talked about the danger of making a righteousness of forms and rites and ceremonies, and seemed of opinion that the proceedings at the Episcopal church, however attractive, were only an insidious putting forth of one paw of the Scarlet Beast of Rome, and that if not vigorously opposed the whole quadruped, tooth and claw, would yet be upon their backs.

But it must not be supposed that this side of the question had all the talk to itself. The Rev. Simeon Coan was a youth of bright parts, vigorous combativeness, and considerable fluency of speech, and he immediately prepared a sermon on his side of the question, by which, in the opinion of the Lewises, the Danforths, the Copleys, and all the rest of his audience, he proved beyond a doubt that Christmas ought to be kept, and that the 25th of December was the proper time for keeping it. He brought also quotations from Greek and Latin thick as stars in the skies; and as to the quotations of the doctor he ignored them altogether, and talked about something else.

The doctor had been heard to observe with a subdued triumph that he really would like to see how "Coan"

would "get round" that passage in Clement, but he could not have that pleasure, because "Coan" did not get anywhere near it, but struck off as far as possible from it into a region of quotations on his own side; and as his audience were not particularly fitted to adjudicate nice points in chronology, and as quotations from the Church Fathers on all sides of almost any subject under the sun are plentiful as blackberries in August, Mr. Coan succeeded in making his side to the full as irrefragable in the eyes of his hearers as the doctor's in those of his.

But besides this he reinforced himself by proclaiming with vigor the authority of the Church. "The Church has ordained," "The Church in her wisdom has directed," "The Church commands," and "The Church hath appointed," were phrases often on his tongue, and the sound rolled smoothly above the heads of good old families who had long felt the want of some definite form of authority to support their religious preferences in face of the general Congregationalism of the land.

The *Church*, that mysterious and awful power that had come down from distant ages, had survived the dissolution of monarchies and was to-day the same as of old! The thought was poetical and exciting, and gave impulse to the fervor inspired by a liturgy and forms of worship allowed even by adversaries to be noble and beautiful; and their minister's confident assertion that the Church commanded, approved, and backed up all that they were doing was immensely supporting to the little band. The newly acquired members, born and brought up in Congregational discipline, felt all the delight of a new sense of liberty. It had not always been possible to go to any other than the dominant church, and there was a fresh emotion of pleasure in being able to do as they pleased in the matter; so they readily accepted Mr. Coan's High Church claims and doctrines. Instead of standing on the defensive and

apologizing for their existence he boldly struck out for the rock of apostolic succession, declared their church *the* true Apostolic Church, the only real church in the place, although he admitted with an affable charity that doubtless good Christian people among the various sects who departed from this true foundation might at last be saved through the uncovenanted mercies of God.

Imagine the scorn which this doctrine inspired in Puritan people, who had been born in the faith that New England was the vine which God's right hand had planted — who had looked on her church as the Church of God, cast out, indeed, into the wilderness, but bearing with her "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." That faith was woven into the very existence of the New England race. They cast great roots about it as the oaks of the forest grasped and grew out of the eternal rocks of their hard and barren shores. So when Mr. Simeon Coan, in a white surplice, amid suspicious chantings and bowings and genuflections, announced a doctrine which disfranchised them of the heavenly Jerusalem, and made them aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise, there was a grim sense of humor mingled with the indignation which swelled their bosoms.

"Uncovenanted marcies!" said stout Tim Hawkins. "Thet's what they call 'em, do they? Wal, ef thet's what Parson Cushing and all the ministers of our association has got to live and die by — why, it's good enough for me. I don't want no better; I don't care which kind they be. I scorn to argue with such folks."

In fact, they felt as if they had seen a chip sparrow flying in the face of an eagle in his rock-bound eyrie.

But the doctor's sermon had the effect to draw the lines as to keeping Christmas up to the tightest brace. The Academy teacher took occasion on Monday to remark to his

scholars how he had never thought of such a thing as suspending school for Christmas holidays, and those of the pupils who, belonging to Episcopal families, had gone on Christmas Day to church were informed that marks for absence and non-performance of lessons would stand against them, no matter what excuses they might bring from parents. As to Christmas holidays — the giving up to amusement a week, from Christmas to New Year's — he spoke of it as a popish enormity not to be mentioned or even thought of in God-fearing New England, which abhorred a holiday as much as nature abhors a vacuum. Those parents whose children had been drawn in to attend these seductive festivities were anxiously admonished by their elders in homilies from the text, "Surely, in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird."

For example, witness one scene. It is Sunday evening, and the bright snapping fire lights up the great kitchen chimney where the Widow Jones is sitting by the stand with her great Bible before her. A thin, weary, kindly old face is hers, with as many lines in it as Denner's celebrated picture of the old woman. Everything about her, to her angular figure and her thin, bony hands, bore witness to the unsparing work that had been laid upon every hour and moment of her life. Even now the thin hands that rested on the Bible twitched at times mechanically as if even in the blessed rest of Sunday evening she felt the touch of the omnipresent knitting-needles.

On the settle beside the fire, half stretched out, lounges Hiel, her youngest-born son and the prop of her old age; for all others have gone hither and thither seeking their future in the world. Hiel has been comforting her heart by the heartiest praises of the minister's sermon that day.

"I tell you what, mother, them 'Piscopals got pitched into lively, now; the doctor pursued 'em 'even unto Shur,' as the Scriptur' says."

"Yis; and, Hiel, I hope you won't be seen goin' to the 'Piscopal meetings no more. I felt reely consarned, after I heard the sarmon, to think of your bein' in to that 'ere 'lumination."

"Oh laws, mother, I jest *hed* to go to see to things. Things hez to be seen to; there was the doctor's boys right up in the front slips, and little Dolly there rolled up like a rabbit down there under them spruces. I hed to take her home. I expect it 's what waked up the doctor so, what I said to him."

"Wal, Hiel, mebbe it was all fer the best; but I hope you 'll let it alone now. And I heard you was a-settin' up with Nabby Higgins the other evenin'; was you?"

A curious expression passed over Hiel's droll handsome face, and he drew his knife from his pocket and began reflectively to shave a bit of shingle.

"Wal, yis, mother; the fact is, I did stay with Nabby Christmas evening, as they call it. Nabby and me 's allers ben good friends, you know. You know, mother, you think lots of Nabby's mother, Mis' Higgins, and it ain't her fault nor Nabby's ef she hez to leave our meetin'. It 's old Zeph that makes 'em."

"Oh yis. I ha'n't nothin' agin Mis' Higgins. Polly Higgins is a good woman as is goin'. I don't want no better; but as to Nabby, why, she 's light and triflin', and she 's goin' right into all these 'ere vanities; and I don't want no son of mine to get drawn away arter her. You know how 't was in old times, it was the Moabitish women that allers made mischief."

"Oh, land o' Goshen, mother, jes' as ef it would do any harm fer me to set up with Nabby in the minister's own kitchen. Ef she don't pisen the minister's boys and Dolly she won't pisen me; besides, I wanted to see what was in that 'ere bundle Mis' Cushing's folks sent to her from Boston. Of course I knew you 'd be a-wantin' to know."

"Wal, did you see?" said the widow, snapping at once at the bait so artfully thrown.

"I rather reckon I did. Dolly she got a red frock and red shoes, and she was so tickled nothing would do but she must bring her red frock and red shoes right out to show to Nabby. They think all the world of each other, Nabby and Dolly do."

"Was the dress made up?" said the widow.

"Oh yis; all made up, ready to put right on."

"Red, did you say?"

"Yes, red as a robin, with little black sprigs in 't, and her shoes red morocco. I tell you she put 'em on and squeaked round in 'em lively! Then there was six silk pocket-handkerchers for the doctor, all hemmed, and his name marked in the corner; and there was a nice book for each o' them boys, and a bunnet-ribbin for Mis' Cushing."

"What color was it?" said the widow.

"Wal, I don't know — sort o' sky-blue scarlet," said Hiel, tired of particulars. "I never know what women call their ribbins."

"Wal, reely now, it 's a good thing for folks to have rich relations," soliloquized the widow. "I don't grudge Mis' Cushing her prosperity — not a grain."

"Yis, and the doctor's folks was glad enough to get them things, if they *was* Christmas presents. The Christmas did n't pisen 'em, anyway; Mis' Cushing's folks up to Boston 's 'Piscopals, but she thinks they 're pretty nice folks, if they *be* 'Piscopals."

"Now, Hiel," said the widow, "Nabby Higgins is a nice girl — a girl that 's got faculty, and got ambition, and she 's handsome. I expect she 's prudent and laid by something out of her wages" — and here the widow paused and gazed reflectively at the sparks on the chimney-back.

"Wal, mother, the upshot on 't is that if I and Nabby should want to make a team together there would n't be no

call for wailin' and gnashin' of teeth. There might wuss things happen; but jes' now Nabby and I 's good friends — that 's all."

And with this settlement the Widow Jones, like many another mother, was forced to rest contented, sure that her son, in his own good time, would — do just as he pleased.

CHAPTER IX

ELECTION DAY IN POGANUC

THE month of March had dawned over the slippery, snow-clad hills of Poganuc. The custom that enumerates this as among the spring months was in that region the most bitter irony. Other winter months were simple winter — cold, sharp, and hard enough — but March was winter with a practical application, driven in by winds that pierced through joints and marrow. Not an icicle of all the stalactites which adorned the fronts of houses had so much as thought of thawing; the snowbanks still lay in white billows above the tops of the fences; the roads, through which the ox-sleds of the farmers crunched and squeaked their way, were cut deep down through heavy drifts, and there was still the best prospect in the world for future snowstorms; but yet it was called "spring." And the voting day had come; and Zeph Higgins, full of the energy of a sovereign and voter, was up at four o'clock in the morning, bestirring himself with a tempestuous clatter to rouse his household and be by daylight on the way to town to exercise his rights.

The feeble light of a tallow dip seemed to cut but a small circle into the darkness of the great kitchen. The frost sparkled white on the back of the big fireplace, where the last night's coals lay raked up under banks of ashes. An earthquake of tramping cowhide boots shook the rafters and stairs, and the four boys appeared on the scene of action. Backlog and forestick were soon piled and kindlings laid, and the fire roared and snapped and

crackled up the ample chimney. Meek, shadowy Mrs. Higgins, with a step like a snowflake, and resignation and submission in every line of her face, was proceeding to cut off frozen sausages from the strings of the same that garnished the kitchen walls. The teakettle was hung over the blaze, and Zeph and the boys, with hats crowded down to their eyes, and tippets tied over their ears, ploughed their way to the barn to milk and feed the stock.

When they returned, while the teakettle was puffing and the sausages frying and sizzling, there was an interval in which Zeph called to family prayers, and began reading the Bible with a voice as loud and harsh as the winds that were blowing out of doors.

Zeph always read the Bible straight along in course, without a moment's thought or inquiry as to the sense of what he was reading, which this morning was from Zechariah xi., as follows: "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because all the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled." Zeph rendered the whole chapter with his harshest tones, and then, all standing, he enunciated in stentorian voice the morning prayer, whose phrases were an heirloom that had descended from father to son for generations.

The custom of family worship was one of the most rigid inculcations of the Puritan order of society, and came down from parent to child with the big family Bible, where the births, deaths, and marriages of the household stood recorded. In Zeph's case the custom seemed to be merely an inherited tradition, which had dwindled into a habit purely mechanical. Yet, who shall say?

Of a rugged race, educated in hardness, wringing his

substance out of the very teeth and claws of reluctant nature, on a rocky and barren soil, and under a harsh, forbidding sky, who but the All-Seeing could judge him? In that hard soul there may have been thus uncouthly expressed a loyalty for Something Higher, however dimly perceived. It was acknowledging that even he had his master. One thing is certain, the custom of family prayers, such as it was, was a great comfort to the meek saint by his side, to whom any form of prayer, any pause from earthly care and looking up to a heavenly Power, was a blessed rest. In that daily toil, often beyond her strength, when she never received a word of sympathy or praise, it was a comfort all day to her to have had a chapter in the Bible and a prayer in the morning. Even though the chapter were one that she could not by possibility understand a word of, yet it put her in mind of things in that same dear book that she did understand; things that gave her strength to live and hope to die by, and it was enough! Her faith in the Invisible Friend was so strong that she needed but to touch the hem of his garment. Even a table of genealogies out of *his* book was a sacred charm, an amulet of peace.

Four sons — tall, stout, and ruddy, in different stages of progression — surrounded the table and caused sausages, rye and Indian bread, and pork and beans rapidly to disappear. Of these sons two only were of the age to vote. Zeph rigorously exacted of his boys the full amount of labor which the law allowed till their majority; but at twenty-one he recognized their legal status, and began giving them the wages of hired men. On this morning he longed to have his way as to their vote; but the boys had enough of his own nature in them to have a purpose and will of their own, and how they were to vote was an impenetrable secret locked up in the rocky fastnesses of their own bosoms.

As soon as there were faint red streaks in the wintry sky, Zeph's sled was on the road, well loaded up with cord-wood to be delivered at Colonel Davenport's door; for Zeph never forgot business nor the opportunity of earning an honest penny. The oxen that drew his sled were sleek, well-fed beasts, the pride of Zeph's heart; and as the red sunlight darted across the snowy hills their breath steamed up, a very luminous cloud of vapor, which in a few moments congealed in sparkling frost lines on their patient eye-winkers and every little projecting hair around their great noses. The sled-runners creaked and grated as Zeph, with loud "Whoa," "Haw," or "Gee," directed the plodding course of his beasts. The cutting March wind was blowing right into his face; his shaggy, grizzled eyebrows and bushy beard were whitening apace; but he was in good spirits — he was going to vote against the Federalists; and as the largest part of the aristocracy of Town Hill were Federalists, he rejoiced all the more. Zeph was a creature born to oppose, as much as white bears are made to walk on ice. And how, we ask, would New England's rocky soil and icy hills have been made mines of wealth unless there had been human beings born to oppose, delighting to combat and wrestle, and with an unconquerable power of will?

Zeph had taken a thirteen-acre lot so rocky that a sheep could scarce find a nibble there, had dug out and blasted and carted the rocks, wrought them into a circumambient stone fence, ploughed and planted, and raised crop after crop of good rye thereon. He did it with heat, with zeal, with dogged determination; he did it all the more because neighbors said he was a fool for trying, and that he could never raise anything on that lot. There was a stern joy in this hand-to-hand fight with nature. He got his bread as Samson did his honeycomb, out of the carcass of the slain lion. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out

of the strong came forth sweetness." Even the sharp March wind did not annoy him. It was a controversial wind, and that suited him; it was fighting him all the way, and he enjoyed beating it. Such a human being has his place in the Creator's scheme.

Poganuc was, for a still town, pretty well alive on that day. Farmers in their blue linsey frocks, with their long cart-whips, and their sleds hitched here and there at different doors, formed frequent objects in the picture. It was the day when they felt themselves as good as anybody. The court house was surrounded by groups earnestly discussing the political questions; many of them loafers who made a sort of holiday, and interspersed their observations and remarks with visits to the bar-room of Glazier's Tavern, which was doing a thriving business that morning.

Standing by the side of the distributer of the Federal votes might be seen a tall, thin man, with a white head and an air of great activity and keenness. In his twinkling eye and in every line and wrinkle of his face might be read the observer and the humorist; the man who finds something to amuse him in all the quips and turns and oddities of human nature. This was Israel Dennie, high sheriff of the county, one of the liveliest and shrewdest of the Federal leaders, who was, so to speak, crackling with activity, and entering into the full spirit of the day in all its phases.

"Here comes one of your party, Adams," he said, with a malicious side twinkle, to the distributer of the Democratic votes, as Abe Bowles, a noted *mauvais sujet* of the village, appeared out of Glazier's bar-room, coming forward with a rather uncertain step and flushed face.

"Walk up, friend; here you are."

"I 'm a-goin' for toleration," said Abe, with thick utterance. "We 've ben tied up too tight by these 'ere ministers, we have. I don't want no priestcraft, I don't.

I believe every man 's got to do as he darn pleases, I do."

"And go straight to the devil if he wants to," said Squire Dennie smoothly. "Go ahead, my boy, and put in your vote."

"There comes old Zeph Higgins," he added, with alertness; "let us have a bit of fun with him."

"Hulloa, Higgins; step this way; here 's Mr. Adams to give you your vote. You 're going to vote the Democratic ticket, you know."

"No, I ain't, nuther," said Zeph, from the sheer mechanical instinct of contradiction.

"Not going to vote with the Democrats, Higgins? All right, then you 're going to vote the Federal ticket; here 't is."

"No, I ain't, nuther. You let me alone. I ain't a-goin' to be dictated to. I 'm a-goin' to vote jest as I 'm a mind ter. I won't vote for nuther, ef I ain't a mind ter, and I 'll vote for jest which one I want ter, and no other."

"So you shall, Higgins, — so you shall," said Squire Dennie sympathetically, laying his hand on Zeph's shoulder.

"I sha'n't, nuther; you let me alone," said Zeph, shaking off the sheriff's hand; and clutching at the Democratic ticket, he pushed up towards the polls.

"There 's a fellow, now," said Sheriff Dennie, looking after him with a laugh. "That fellow 's so contrary that he hates to do the very thing he wants to, if anybody else wants him to do it. If there was any way of voting that would spite both parties and please nobody, he 'd take that. The only way to get that fellow to heaven would be to set out to drive him to hell; then he 'd turn and run up the narrow way, full chisel."

It was some comfort to Zeph, however, to work his way

up to the polls with Judge Belcher right in front and with Colonel Davenport's aristocratic, powdered head and stately form pushing him along behind, their broadcloth crowded against his homespun carter's frock, and he, Zephaniah, that day just as good as either. He would not have been so well pleased if he knew that his second son, Abner, — following not long after him, — dropped in the box the Federalist ticket. It was his right as a freeman; but he had no better reason for his preference than the wish to please his mother. He knew that Dr. Cushing was a Federalist, and that his mother was heart and soul for everything that Dr. Cushing was for, and therefore he dropped this vote for his mother; and thus, as many times before and since, a woman voted through her son. In fact, the political canvas just at this epoch had many features that might shock the pious sensibilities of a good housemother. The union of all the minor religious denominations to upset the dominant rule of the Congregationalists had been reinforced and supplemented by all that Jacobin and irreligious element which the French Revolution had introduced into America.

The Poganuc "Banner," a little weekly paper published in the village, expended its energies in coarse and scurrilous attacks upon ministers in general, and Dr. Cushing in particular. It ridiculed church members, churches, Sunday-keeping, preaching, and prayers; in short, every custom, preference, and prejudice which it had been the work of years to establish in New England was assailed with vulgar wit and ribaldry.

Of course, the respectable part of the Democratic party did not exactly patronize these views; yet they felt for them that tolerance which even respectable people often feel in a rude push of society in a direction where they wish to go. They wanted the control of the state; and if rabid, drinking, irreligious men would give it to them,

why not use them after their kind? When the brutes had won the battle for them, they would take care of the brutes, and get them back into their stalls.

The bar-room of Glazier's Tavern was the scene of the feats and boasts of this class of voters. Long before this time the clergy of Connecticut, alarmed at the progress of intemperance, had begun to use influence in getting stringent laws and restraints upon drinking, and the cry, of course, was, "Down with the laws."

"Tell ye what," said Mark Merrill, "we 've ben tied up so tight we could n't wink mor' 'n six times a week, and the parsons want to git it so we can't wink at all; and we won't have it so no longer; we 're goin' to have liberty."

"Down with the tithing-man, say I," said Tim Sykes. "Whose business is it what I do Sundays? I ain't goin' to have no tithing-man spying on my liberty. I 'll do jest what I 'm a mind ter, Sundays. Ef I wan' ter go a-fishin' Sundays, I 'll go a-fishin'."

"Tell ye what," said Liph Kingsley, as he stirred his third glass of grog, "this 'ere priestcraft 's got to go down. Reason 's got on her throne, and chains is fallin'. I 'm a freeman — I be."

"You look like it," said Hiel, who stood with his hands in his pockets contemptuously surveying Liph, while with leering eye and unsteady hand he stirred his drink.

"That 'ere 's what you call Reason, is 't?" added Hiel. "Wal, she 's got on a pretty topplish throne, seems to me. I bet you Reason can't walk a crack now," he said, as Liph, having taken off his glass, fell with a helpless dump upon the settle.

"Sot down like a spoonful of apple saas," said Hiel, looking him over sarcastically. The laugh now turned against the poor brute, and Hiel added, "Wal, boys, s'pose you like this 'ere sort of thing. Folks is different; for my part, I like to kinder keep up a sort o' difference

'tween me and a hog. That 'ere 's my taste; but you 're welcome to yourn," and Hiel went out to carry his observations elsewhere.

Hiel felt his own importance to the community of Poganuc Centre too much to have been out of town on this day, when its affairs needed so much seeing to; therefore he had deputed Ned Bissel, a youth yet wanting some two years of the voting age, to drive his team for him while he gave his undivided attention to public interests; and indeed, as nearly as mortal man can be omnipresent, Hiel had been everywhere and heard everything, and, as the French say, "assisted" generally at the political struggle. Hiel considered himself as the provisional owner and caretaker of the town of Poganuc. It was *our* town, and Dr. Cushing was *our* minister, and the great meeting-house on the green was *our* meeting-house, and the singers' seat therein was *our* singers' seat, and he was ready to bet on any sermon, or action, or opinion of *our* minister. Hiel had not yet, as he phrased it, experienced religion, nor joined the church; but he "calculated he should some of these days." It was n't Dr. Cushing's fault if he was n't converted, he was free to affirm. Hiel had been excessively scandalized with the scurrilous attacks of the Poganuc "Banner," and felt specially called to show his colors on that day. He had assured his mother on going out that morning that she need n't be a mite afeard, for he was a-goin' to stand up for the minister through thick and thin, and if any of them Democrats "saassed" him he 'd give 'em as good as they sent.

In virtue of his ardent political zeal, he felt himself to-day on equal and speaking terms with all the Federal magnates; he clapped Colonel Davenport on the shoulder assuringly, and talked about "our side," and was familiar with Judge Belcher and Sheriff Dennie — darting hither and thither, observing and reporting with untiring zeal.

But, after all, that day the Democrats beat, and got the State of Connecticut. Sheriff Dennie was the first to carry the news of defeat into the parsonage at eventide.

"Well, doctor, we 're smashed. Democrats beat us all to flinders."

A general groan arose.

"Yes, yes," said the sheriff. "Everything has voted that could stand on its hind legs, and the hogs are too many for us. It 's a bad beat — bad beat."

That night when little Dolly came in to family prayers, she looked around wondering. Her father and mother looked stricken and overcome. There was the sort of heaviness in the air that even a child can feel when deep emotions are aroused. The boys, who knew only in a general way that their father's side had been beaten, looked a little scared at his dejected face.

"Father, what makes you feel so bad?" said Will, with that surprised wonder with which children approach emotions they cannot understand.

"I feel for the Church of God, my child," he said, and then he sung for the evening psalm: —

> "I love thy kingdom, Lord,
> The house of thine abode;
> The Church our dear Redeemer saved
> With his own precious blood.
>
> "For her my tears shall fall,
> For her my prayers ascend;
> To her my cares and toils be given
> Till toils and cares shall end."

In the prayer that followed he pleaded for New England with all the Hebraistic imagery by which she was identified with God's ancient people: —

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel; thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. . . . Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou didst cast forth the heathen, and plant it;

thou preparedst room for it and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges so that all that pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it; the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O Lord, and visit this vine and vineyard that thou hast planted and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself."

It was with a voice tremulous and choking with emotion that Dr. Cushing thus poured forth the fears and the sorrows of his heart for the New England of the Puritans; the ideal church and state which they came hither to found.

Little Dolly cried from a strange childish fear, because of the trouble in her father's voice. The pleading tones affected her, she knew not why. The boys felt a martial determination to stand by their father and a longing to fight for him. All felt as if something deep and dreadful must have happened, and after prayers Dolly climbed into her father's lap, and put both arms around his neck, and said, "Papa, there sha'n't anything hurt you. I 'll defend you." She was somewhat abashed by the cheerful laugh which followed, but the doctor kissed her and said, "So you shall, dear; be sure and not let anything catch me," and then he tossed her up in his arms gleefully, and she felt as if the trouble, whatever it was, could not be quite hopeless.

But Dolly marveled in her own soul as she went to bed. She heard the boys without stint reviling the Democrats as the authors of all mischief; and yet Bessie Lewis's father was a Democrat, and he seemed a nice, cheery, good-natured man, who now and then gave her sticks of candy, and there was his mother, dear old Madam Lewis, who

gave her the Christmas cooky. How could it be that such good people were Democrats? Poor Dolly hopelessly sighed over the mystery, but dared not ask questions.

But the Rev. Mr. Coan rejoiced in the result of the election. Not that he was by any means friendly to the ideas of the Jacobinical party by whose help it had been carried; but because, as he said, it opened a future for the church — for he, too, had his idea of "The Church." Meanwhile the true church, invisible to human eyes, — one in spirit, though separated by creeds, — was praying and looking upward, in the heart of Puritan and Ritualist, in the heart of old Madam Lewis, of the new church, and of old Mrs. Higgins, whose soul was with the old meeting-house; of all everywhere who with humble purpose and divine aspiration were praying, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done."

That kingdom was coming even then, — for its coming is in safer hands than those on either side, — and there came a time, years after, when Parson Cushing, looking back on that election and its consequences, could say with another distinguished Connecticut clergyman: —

"I suffered more than tongue can tell for the best thing that ever happened to old Connecticut."

CHAPTER X

DOLLY'S PERPLEXITIES

Dolly went to bed that night, her little soul surging and boiling with conjecture. All day scraps of talk about the election had reached her ears; her nerves had been set vibrating by the tones of her father's prayer, some words of which yet rung in her ear — tones of passionate pleading whose purport she could scarcely comprehend. What was this dreadful thing that had happened or was going to happen? She heard her brother Will emphatically laying off the state of the case to Nabby in the kitchen, and declaring that "the Democrats were going to upset the whole state, for father said so."

Exactly what this meant Dolly could not conceive; but coupled with her mother's sorrowful face and her father's prayer, it must mean something dreadful. Something of danger to them all might be at hand, and she said her "pray God to bless my dear father and mother" with unusual fervor.

Revolving the matter on her pillow, she had a great mind, the next time she met General Lewis with his smiling face, to walk boldly up to him and remonstrate, and tell him to let her papa alone and not upset the state! Dolly had a great store of latent heroism and felt herself quite capable of making a courageous defense of her father — and her heart swelled with a purpose to stand by him to the last gasp, no matter what came. But Sleep soon came down with her downy wings, and the great blue eyes were closed, and Dolly knew not a word more till waked

by the jingling of sleigh-bells and the creaking of sleds at early sunrise.

She sprang up, dressed quickly, and ran to the window. Evidently the state had *not* been upset during the night, for the morning was clear, bright, and glorious as heart could desire. The rosy light of morning filled the air, the dreary snow-wreaths lay sparkling in graceful lines with tender hues of blue and lilac and pink in their shadows, and merry sleigh-bells were ringing, and the boys were out snowballing each other in mere wantonness of boy life, while Spring was barking frantically, evidently resolved to be as frisky a boy as any of them. The fears and apprehensions of last night were all gone like a cloud, and she hurried down into the kitchen to find Nabby stirring up her buckwheat batter, and running to the window to see Hiel go by on the stage, kissing his hand to her as he passed.

"I declare! the imperence of that cretur," said Nabby.

"What, Hiel?" asked Dolly.

"Yes. Hiel Jones! he's the conceitedest fellow that ever I did see. You can't look out of a window but he thinks you're running to look at *him.*"

"And wasn't you running to look at him?" asked Dolly.

"Land o' Goshen, no! What should I want to look at *him* for? I jest wanted to see — well, them horses he's got."

"Oh," said Dolly.

Upon reflection she added: —

"I thought you liked Hiel, Nabby."

"You thought I liked Hiel?" said Nabby, laughing. "What a young un! Why, I can't bear the sight of him," and Nabby greased her griddle with combative energy. "He's the saassiest fellow I ever see. *I can't bear him!*"

Dolly reflected on this statement gravely, while Nabby dropped on the first griddleful of cakes; finally she said: —

"If you don't like Hiel, Nabby, what made you sit up so late with him Christmas night?"

"Who said I did?" said Nabby, beginning to turn griddle-cakes with velocity.

"Why, Will and Tom; they both say so. They heard when Hiel went out the kitchen door, and they counted the clock striking twelve just as he went. Will says he kissed you, too, Nabby. Did he?"

"Well, if ever I see such young uns!" said Nabby, flaming carnation color over the fire as she took off the cakes. "That Bill is saassy enough to physic a hornbug. I never see the beat of him!"

"But did Hiel stay so late, Nabby?"

"Well, yes, to be sure he did. I thought I never should have got him out of the house. If I had n't let him kiss me I believe in my soul I 'd 'a' had to set up with him till morning; he said he would n't go without. I 've been mad at him ever since. I told him never to show his face here again; but I know he 'll come. He does it on purpose to plague me."

"That is dreadful!" said Dolly meditatively. "I would n't let him. I 'll tell you what," she added, with animation, "*I 'll* talk to him and tell him he must n't come here any more. Sha'n't I, Nabby?"

But Nabby laughed and said, "No, no; little girls must n't talk so. Don't you never say nothin' to Hiel about it; if you do I won't tell you no more. Here, carry in this plate o' cakes, for they 're eatin' breakfast. I heard your pa askin' blessin' just after you came down. You carry these in while I get on the next griddleful."

Dolly assumed her seat at table, but there again the trouble met her. Her father and mother were talking together with sad, anxious faces.

"It is a most mysterious dispensation why this is allowed," said her mother.

"Yes, my dear, 'clouds and darkness are round about Him,' but we must have faith."

Here Spring varied the discourse by putting his sombre black visage over Dolly's arm and resting his nose familiarly on the table, whereat she could n't help giving him the half of a griddle-cake.

"How many times must I tell you, Dolly, that Spring is never to be fed at the table?" said her mother. "I love dogs," she added, "but it spoils them to be fed at table."

"Why, papa does it sometimes," pleaded Tom.

Mrs. Cushing was obliged to confess to the truth of this, for the doctor when pursuing the deeper mazes of theology was sometimes so abstracted that his soul took no note of what his body was doing, and he had been more than once detected in giving Spring large rations under the table while expounding some profound mysteries of foreknowledge and free will.

Tom's remark was a home-thrust, but his mother said reprovingly: —

"Your father never means to do it; but he has so much to do and think of that he is sometimes absent-minded."

A conscious twinkle might have been observed playing about the blue eyes of the doctor, and a shrewd observer might have surmised that the offense was not always strictly involuntary; for the doctor, though a most docile and tractable husband, still retained here and there traces of certain wild male instincts and fell at times into singular irregularities. He had been known to upset all Mrs. Cushing's nicely arranged yarn-baskets and stocking-baskets and patch-baskets, pouring the contents in a heap on the floor, and carrying them off bodily to pick up chestnuts in, when starting off with the children on a nutting expedi-

tion. He would still persist at intervals in going to hunt eggs in the barn with Dolly, and putting the fruits of the search in his coat-tail pocket, though he had once been known to sit down on a pocketful at a preparatory lecture, the bell for which rung while he was yet on the haymow.

On this occasion, therefore, Spring made an opportune diversion in the mournful turn the conversation was taking. The general tone of remark became slightly admonitory on the part of Mrs. Cushing and playfully defensive on the part of the doctor. In their "heart of heart" the boys believed their father sometimes fed Spring when he *did* know what he was about, and this belief caused constant occasional lapses from strict statute law on their part.

That morning, in prayers, their father read, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed; though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;" and at those verses he stopped and said, "There, my dear, there must be our comfort." And then they sung: —

> "Oh God, our help in ages past,
> Our hope for years to come,
> Our shelter from the stormy blast,
> And our eternal home."

Then in prayer he plead for the Church — the Church of God, the vine of his planting — and said: —

"When the enemy cometh in like a flood, may Thy spirit lift up a standard against them;" and again Dolly trembled and wondered. But after prayers Bill suddenly burst back into the house.

"Oh! mamma, there *is* a bluebird! Spring is come!"

"A bluebird! Impossible so early in March. You must be mistaken."

"No. Come to the door; you can hear him just as plain!"

And sure enough, on the highest top of the great button-

ball-tree opposite the house sat the little blue angel singing with all his might — a living sapphire dropped down from the walls of the beautiful city above. A most sanguine and imprudent bluebird certainly he must have been, though the day was so lovely and the great icicles on the eaves of the house were actually commencing to drip. But there undoubtedly he was — herald and harbinger of good days to come.

"It is an omen," said the doctor, as he put his arms fondly round his wife. "The Lord liveth, and blessed be our rock!"

And the boys and Dolly ran out, shouting wildly: —

"There 's been a bluebird. Spring is coming — spring is coming!"

CHAPTER XI

DOLLY AND NABBY INVITED OUT

YES, spring was coming; the little blue herald was right, though he must have chilled his beak and frozen his toes as he sat there. But he came from the great Somewhere, where things are always bright; where life and summer and warmth and flowers are forever going on while we are bound down under ice and snow. There was a thrill in the hearts of all the children that day, with visions of coming violets, hepaticas, and anemones, of green grass and long bright sunny rambles by the side of the Poganuc River. The boys were so premature in hope as to get out their store of fish-hooks, and talk of trouting. The doctor looked over his box of garden-seeds, and read the labels. "Early Lettuce," "Early Cucumbers," "Summer Squashes," — all this was inspiring reading, and seemed to help him to have faith that a garden was coming round again, though the snowbanks yet lay over the garden-spot deep and high. All day long it thawed and melted; a warm south wind blew, and the icicles dripped, so that there was a continual patter. Two circumstances of importance in Dolly's horoscope combined on this happy day: Hiel invited Nabby to an evening sleigh-ride after supper, and Mrs. Davenport invited her father and mother to a tea-drinking at the same time.

Notwithstanding her stout words about Hiel, Nabby in the most brazen and decided manner declared her intention to accept his invitation, because (as she remarked) "Hiel had just bought a brand-new sleigh, and Almiry Smith had

said publicly that *she* was going to have the first ride in that 'ere sleigh, and she would like to show Almiry that she did n't know everything." Nabby had inherited from her father a fair share of combativeness, which was always bubbling and boiling within her comely person at the very idea of imaginary wrongs; and as she excitedly wiped her teacups she went on: —

"That 'ere Almiry Smith is a stuck-up thing; always turning up her nose at me, and talking about my being a hired gal. What 's the difference? I live out and work and she stays to home and works. I work for the minister's folks and get my dollar a week, and she works for her father and don't git nothin' but just her board and her keep. So I don't see why she need take airs over me — and she sha'n't do it!"

But there was a tranquilizing influence breathing over Nabby's soul, and she soon blew off the little stock of spleen and invited Dolly into her bedroom to look at her new Leghorn bonnet, just home from Miss Hinsdale's milliner-shop, which she declared was too sweet for anything. Now, Leghorn bonnets were a newly imported test of station, grandeur, and gentility in Poganuc. Up to this period the belles of New England had worn braided straw, abundantly pretty, and often braided by the fair fingers of the wearers themselves, while they studied their lessons or read the last novel or poem. But this year Miss Hetty Davenport, and Miss Ellen Dennie, and the blooming daughters of the governor, and the fair Maria Gridley had all illuminated their respective pews in the meeting-house with Leghorn flats — large and fine of braid, and tremulous with the delicacy of their fibre. Similar wonders appeared on the heads of the juvenile aristocracy of the Episcopal church; and the effect was immediate. Straw bonnets were "nowhere." To have a Leghorn was the thing; and Miss Hinsdale imported those of many

qualities and prices, to suit customers. Nabby's was not of so fine a braid as that of the governor's daughters; still it was a real Leghorn hat, and her soul was satisfied. She wanted a female bosom to sympathize with her in this joy, and Dolly was the chosen one. Proud of this confidence, Dolly looked, exclaimed, admired, and assisted at the toilet trial — yet somewhat wondering at the facility with which Nabby forgot all her stringent declarations of the morning before.

"You don't suppose he would dare to kiss you again, Nabby?" Dolly suggested timidly, while Nabby stood at the glass with her bonnet on, patting her curls, shaking her head, pulling into place here a bow and there a flower.

"Why, Dolly Cushing," said Nabby, laughing, "what a young un you are to remember things! I never saw such a child!"

"But you said" — cried Dolly.

"Oh, never mind what I said. Do you suppose I can't keep that fellow in order? I'd just like to have him try it again — and see what he'd get! There now, what do you think of that?" And Nabby turned round and showed a general twinkle of nodding flowers, fluttering ribbons, bright black eyes, and cheeks with laughing dimples which came and went as she spoke or laughed.

"Nabby, I do declare, you are splendid," said Dolly. "Hiel said once you was the handsomest girl in Poganuc."

"He did, did he? Well, I'll let him know a thing or two before I've done with him; and Almiry Smith, too, with her milk-and-water face and stringy curls."

"Did that bonnet cost a great deal?" asked Dolly.

"What do you mean, child?" asked Nabby, turning quickly and looking at her.

"Nothing, only Mrs. Davenport said that hired girls were getting to dress just like ladies."

Nabby flared up and grew taller, and seemed about to rise from the floor in spontaneous combustion.

"I declare!" she said. "That's just like these 'ere stuck-up Town Hill folks. Do they think nobody's to have silk gowns and Leg'orn bonnets but them? Who's a better right, I should like to know? Don't we *work* for our money, and ain't it *our'n?* and ain't we just as good as they be? I'll buy just such clothes as I see fit, and if anybody don't like it why they may lump it, that's all. I've a better right to my bonnet than Hetty Davenport has to hers, for I earned the money to pay for it, and she just lives to do nothing, and be a bill of expense to her folks."

Dolly cowered under this little hurricane; but Poganuc being a windy town, Dolly had full experience that the best way to meet a sudden gust is to wait for it to blow itself out, as she did on the present occasion. In a minute Nabby laughed and was herself again; it was impossible to be long uncomfortable with a flower garden on one's head.

"I shall be lonesome to-night without you, Nabby," said Dolly; "the boys talk Latin to me and plague me when I want to play with them."

"Oh, I heard Mis' Cushing say she was going to take you to the tea-party, and that 'll be just as good for you."

Dolly jumped up and down for joy and ran to her mother only to have the joyful tidings confirmed. "I shall never leave Dolly alone in the house again, with nobody but the boys," she said, "and I shall take her with us. It will be a lesson in good manners for her."

It may have been perceived by the intimations of these sketches hitherto that there were in the town of Poganuc two distinct circles of people, who mingled in public affairs as citizens and in church affairs as communicants, but who rarely or never met on the same social plane. There was

the *haute noblesse* — very affably disposed, and perfectly willing to condescend; and there was the proud democracy, prouder than the *noblesse*, who would n't be condescended to, and insisted on having their way and their say, on the literal, actual standpoint of the original equality of human beings. The sons and daughters of farmers and mechanics would willingly exchange labor with each other; the daughters would go to a neighboring household where daughters were few, and help in the family work, and the sons likewise would hire themselves out where there was a deficiency of man-power; but they entered the family as full equals, sharing the same table, the same amusements, the same social freedoms, with the family they served. It was because the Town Hill families wished to hire servants, according to the Old World acceptation of the term, that it became a matter of exceeding difficulty to get any of the free democratic citizens or citizenesses to come to them in that capacity. Only the absolute need of money reconciled any of them to taking such a place, and then they took it with a secret heart-burning and a jealous care to preserve their own personal dignity.

Nabby had compromised her pride in working for "the minister," for the minister in early New England times was the first gentleman of the parish, and a place in his family was a different thing from one in any other. Nevertheless, Nabby required to be guided with a delicate hand and governed with tact and skill. There were things that no free-born American girl would do, and Mrs. Cushing had the grace not to expect those things. For instance, no Yankee girl would come at the ringing of a bell. To expect this would, as they held it, be to place them on a level with the negroes still retained as servants in some old families. It was useless to argue the point. Nabby's cheeks would flush, and her eyes flash, and the string of her tongue would be loosed, and she would pour forth

torrents of declamation if one attempted to show that calling by a bell was no worse than calling by the voice or sending out one of the children. Mrs. Cushing did not try to do it. Another point was the right to enter the house by the front door. Now, as Nabby's work lay in the kitchen and as her sleeping-room was just above, it was manifestly an inconvenience to enter by any other than the kitchen door. Nevertheless, she had heard the subject discussed among other girls, and had admired the spirit shown by her intimate friend, Maria Pratt, when Mrs. Israel Deyter pointed out to her the propriety of entering by the back door, — "Mrs. Deyter, do you think there will be a back and a front door to heaven?"

But Mrs. Cushing avoided the solution of this theological problem by looking on with a smile of calm amusement when Nabby very conspicuously and perseveringly persisted in entering by the front door the first week of her engagement with the family. As nothing was said and nothing done about it, Nabby gradually declined into doing what was most convenient — went the shortest way to her work and room. Nabby was in her way and place a person worth making concessions to, for she was a workwoman not to be despised. Her mother, Mrs. Higgins, was one of those almost fabulous wonders of household genius who by early rising, order, system, neatness, and dispatch reduced the seemingly endless labors of a large family to the very minimum of possibility. Consequently there was little occasion for the mistress of a family to overlook or to teach Nabby. When she entered the household she surveyed the situation with trained eyes, took an account of all work to be done, formed her system, and walked through it daily with energetic ease, always securing to herself two or three hours of leisure every day in which to do her own cutting, fitting, and sewing. According to the maxims in which she had been brought up, a girl that did

not "do up her work in the morning," so as to have this interval of leisure, was not mistress of her business. On washing-days Nabby's work began somewhere in the latter part of the night, and daylight saw her flags of victory waving on the lines in the shape of renovated linen, and Nabby with great composure getting breakfast as on any other day.

She took all her appointed work as a matter of course. Strong, young, and healthy, she scarcely knew what fatigue was. She was cheerful, obliging, and good tempered, as thoroughly healthy people generally are. There was, to be sure, a little deposit of gunpowder in Nabby's nature, and anybody who chose to touch a match to her self-esteem, her sense of personal dignity or independence, was likely to see a pretty lively display of fireworks; but it was always soon over, and the person making the experiment did not generally care to repeat it. But Hiel Jones found this chemical experiment irresistibly fascinating, and apparently did not care how often he burned his fingers with it. Hiel was somewhat *blasé* with easy conquests.

The female sex have had in all ages their spoiled favorites, who are ungrateful just in proportion to the favors bestowed upon them; and Hiel was in his circle as much courted and pursued with flattering attentions as any spoiled tenor of the modern opera. For him did Lucinda and Jane bake surreptitious mountains of sponge-cake. Small tributes of cream, butter, pies of various name and model, awaited him at different stopping-places, and were handed him by fair hands with flattering smiles. The Almira of whom Nabby discoursed with such energetic vehemence had knit Hiel a tippet, worked his name on a pocket-handkerchief with her hair, and even gone so far as to present him with one of the long yellow curls which Nabby was pleased to call "stringy." Nabby's curls certainly could not have merited any such epithet, as every

separate one of them had a will and a way of its own, and all were to the full as mutinous as their mistress. Yet Hiel would have given more for one of those rebellious curls than for all Almira's smooth-brushed locks; and although a kiss from Nabby was like a kiss from one on an electric stool, snapping and prickling at every touch, yet somehow the perverse Hiel liked the excitement of the shock.

Hiel's tactics for the subjugation of a female heart were in the spirit of a poet he never heard of: —

> "Pique her, and soothe in turns;
> Soon passion crowns thy hopes."

He instituted a series of regular quarrels with Nabby, varied by flattering attentions, and delighted to provoke her to anger, sure that she would say a vast deal more than she meant, and then, in the reaction which is always sure to follow in the case of hot-tempered, generous people, he should find his advantage. So when the stars looked out blinking and winking through a steel-blue sky, Nabby, in the fascinating new bonnet, was handed into the smart new sleigh, tucked in with Hiel under a profusion of buffalo robes, and went jingling away. A supper and a dance awaited them at a village tavern ten miles off, and other sleighs and other swains with their ladies were on the same way, where we take our leave of them to follow our little Dolly into the parlors of the *haute noblesse.*

CHAPTER XII

DOLLY GOES INTO COMPANY

When Dolly found herself arrayed in her red dress and red shoes, her hair nicely curled, she was so happy that, to speak scripturally, she leaped for joy — flew round and round with her curls flying, like a little madcap — till her mother was obliged to apply a sedative exhortation.

"Take care, Dolly — take care. I can't take you, now, unless you are good. If you get so wild as that I shall have to leave you at home. Come here, and let me talk to you."

And Dolly came and stood, grave and serious, at her mother's knee, who, while she made over and arranged some of the tumbled curls, proceeded to fortify her mind for the coming emergency with suitable precepts.

"It's a great thing for a little girl like you, Dolly, to be allowed to sit up with grown people till nine o'clock, and to go out with your mamma, and I want you to be very careful and behave as a good little girl should. I take you, so that you may learn good manners. Now, remember, Dolly, you must n't speak to any of them unless you are spoken to."

Dolly reflected on this precept gravely, and then said: —

"Don't they speak to any one except when they are spoken to?"

"Yes, my dear, because they are grown-up people, and know when to speak and what is proper to be said. Little girls do not; so they must be silent. Little girls should be seen and not heard."

Dolly knew this maxim by heart already, and she no more questioned the propriety of it than of any of the great laws of nature.

After an interval of serious reflection she asked: —

"But if any of them should talk to me, then I may talk to them; may I?"

"Yes, my dear; if anybody talks to you, you must answer, but be careful not to talk too long."

"Do you think, mamma, that Judge Gridley will be there?"

"Yes, my dear, I presume so."

"Because I am acquainted with him," remarked Dolly gravely; "he always talks to me. He meets me sometimes coming home from school and talks to me. I am glad he will be there."

Mrs. Cushing smiled aside to her husband as she was tying on Dolly's little hood, and then her father took her up in his arms and they started.

Tea-parties in the highest circles of Poganuc began at six and ended at nine; and so when Dolly and her father and mother arrived they found a room full of people. Colonel Davenport was a tall, elegant man, with an upright, soldierly carriage, his hair powdered white, and tied in a queue down his back; his eyes of a clear, piercing blue, looking out each side of a well-defined aquiline nose; his voice deep and musical, with a sort of resonance which spoke of one used to command. The colonel was one of the most active members of the church, — the one who in the absence of the pastor officiated as lay reader, and rendered the sermon and made the prayers, in the same sonorous, military voice that suggested the field and the commander. Mrs. Davenport, a lady of delicate and refined appearance, with a certain high-bred manner toned down to a kind of motherly sweetness, received the doctor and Mrs. Cushing with effusion, kissed and patted Dolly

on the cheek, and remarked what a nice little girl she was getting to be; and the colonel stooped down and took her hand, like an affable eagle making court to a little humming-bird, and hoped she was quite well, to which Dolly, quite overcome with awe, answered huskily, "Very well, I thank you, sir."

Then kind Mrs. Davenport busied herself in ordering to the front a certain little chair that had a family history. This was duly brought and placed for Dolly by old Cato, an ancient negro servitor of the colonel's, who had once served as his waiter in the army, and had never recovered from the sense of exaltation and dignity conferred by this experience. Dolly sat down, and began employing her eyes about the high and dainty graces of the apartment. The walls were hung with paper imported from France and ornamented with family portraits by Copley. In the fireplace, the high brass andirons sustained a magnificent fire, snapping and sparkling and blazing in a manner gorgeous to behold. Soon Cato came in with the tea on a waiter, followed by Venus, his wife, who, with a high white turban on her head and a clear-starched white apron in front, bore after him a tray laden with delicate rolls, sandwiches, and multiplied and tempting varieties of cake. Dolly spread her handkerchief in her little lap, and comported herself as nearly as possible as she saw the grand ladies doing, who, in satin and velvet and point lace, were making themselves agreeable, and taking their tea with elegant ease.

The tea-parties of Poganuc were not wanting in subjects for conversation. It was in rule to discuss the current literature of the day, which at that time came from across the water — the last articles in the "Edinburgh Review," the latest Waverley novel, the poetry of Moore, Byron, Southey, and Wordsworth — all came under review and had place of consideration.

In those days, when newspapers were few and scanty, when places were isolated and travel was tedious and uncertain, the intellectual life of cultivated people was intense. A book was an event in Poganuc. It was heard of first across the ocean, and watched for, as one watches for the rising of a new planet. While the English packet was slowly laboring over, bearing it to our shores, expectation was rising; and when the book was to be found in the city book-stores an early copy generally found its way to the élite circle of Poganuc.

Never in this day — generation of jaded and sated literary appetite — will any one know the fresh and eager joy, the vivid sensation of delight, with which a poem like "The Lady of the Lake," a novel like "Ivanhoe," was received in lonely mountain towns by a people eager for a new mental excitement. The young folks called the rocks and glens and rivers of their romantic region by names borrowed from Scott; they clambered among the crags of Benvenue and sailed on the bosom of Loch Katrine.

The students in the law offices and the young ladies of the first families had their reading circles and their literary partialities, — some being partisans of Byron, some of Scott, etc., — and there was much innocent spouting of poetry. There were promising youths who tied their open shirt-collars with a black ribbon, and professed disgust at the hollow state of human happiness in general, and there were compassionate young ladies who considered the said young men all the more interesting for this state of mysterious desolation, and often succeeded in the work of consoling them. It must be remarked, however, that the present gathering was a married people's party, and the number of young men and maidens was limited to the immediate family connections. The young people had their parties, with the same general decorum, where the conversation was led by them. In the elderly circles all these literary

and social topics came under discussion. Occasionally Judge Belcher, who was an authority in literary criticism, would hold the ear of the drawing-room while he ran a parallel between the dramatic handling of Scott's characters as compared with those of Shakespeare, or gave an analysis of the principles of the Lake School of Poetry. The judge was an admirable talker, and people in general liked to hear him quite as well as he liked to hear himself, and so his monologues proceeded *nem. con.*

On this particular evening, however, literature was forgotten in the eagerness of politics. The news from the state elections was not in those days spread by telegraph; it lumbered up in stages, and was recorded at most in weekly papers; but enough had come to light to make the Poganuc citizens aware that the State of Connecticut had at last been revolutionized, and gone from the Federalists to the Democrats.

Judge Belcher declaimed upon the subject in language which made the very hair rise upon Dolly's head.

"Yes, sir," he said, addressing Dr. Cushing, "I consider this as the ruin of the State of Connecticut! It 's the triumph of the lower orders; the reign of *sans-culotte*-ism begun. In my opinion, sir, we are over a volcano; I should not be surprised, sir, at an explosion that will blow up all our institutions!"

Dolly's eyes grew larger and larger, although she was a little comforted to observe the judge carefully selecting a particular variety of cake that he was fond of, and helping himself to a third cup of tea in the very midst of these shocking prognostications. Dolly had not then learned the ease and suavity of mind with which both then and ever since people at tea-drinkings and other social recreations declare their conviction that the country is going to ruin. It never appears to have any immediate effect upon the appetite. Dolly looked at her father, and thought

he assented with somewhat of a saddened air; and Mrs. Davenport looked concerned; and Mrs. Judge Gridley said it was a very dark Providence why such things were permitted, but a little while after was commending the delicacy of the cake, and saying she must inquire of Venus about her peculiar mode of confection. Judge Gridley — a white-haired, lively old gentleman with bright eyes, who wore the old-fashioned small-clothes, knee-buckles, silk stockings, and low shoes — had fixed his eyes upon Dolly for some time, and now crossing the room drew her with him into a corner, saying, "Come, now, Miss Dolly, you and I are old friends, you know. What do you think of all these things?"

"Oh, I'm so glad you came," said Dolly, with a long sigh of relief. "I hoped you would, because mamma said I must n't talk unless somebody spoke to me, and I do so want to know all about those dreadful things. What is a volcano? Please tell me!"

"Why, my little Puss," he said, lifting her in his lap and twining her curls round his finger, "what do you want to know that for?"

"Because I heard Judge Belcher say that we were all over a volcano and it would blow us all up some day. Is it like powder?"

"You dear little soul! don't you trouble your head about what Judge Belcher says. He uses strong language. He only means that the Democrats will govern the state."

"And are they so dreadfully wicked?" asked Dolly. "I want to tell you something" — and Dolly whispered, "Bessie Lewis's father is a Democrat, and yet they don't seem like wicked people."

"No, my dear; when you grow up you will learn that there are good people in every party."

"Then you don't think Bessie's father is a bad man?" said Dolly. "I'm so glad!"

"No; he 's a good man in a bad party; that is what I think."

"I wish you 'd talk to him and tell him not to do all these dreadful things, and upset the state," said Dolly. "I thought the other night *I* would; but I 'm only a little girl, you know; he would n't mind me. If I was a grown-up woman I would," she said, with her cheeks flushing and her eyes kindling. Judge Gridley laughed softly to himself and stroked her head.

"When you are a grown-up woman I don't doubt you can make men do almost anything you please, but I don't think it would do any good for *me* to talk to General Lewis; and now, little Curly-wurly, don't bother your pretty head about politics. Neither party will turn the world upside down. There 's a good God above us all, my little girl, that takes care of our country, and he will bring good out of evil. So now don't you worry."

"I 'm afraid, Judge Gridley, that Dolly is troubling you," said Mrs. Cushing, coming up.

"Oh, dear me! madam, no; Miss Dolly and I are old acquaintances. We have the best possible understanding."

But just then, resounding clear and loud through the windy March air, came the pealing notes of the nine o'clock bell, and an immediate rustle of dresses, and rising, and shaking of hands, and cutting short of stories, and uttering last words followed. For though not exactly backed by the arbitrary power which enforced the celebrated curfew, yet the nine o'clock bell was one of the authoritative institutions of New England; and at its sound all obediently set their faces homeward, to rake up house-fires, put out candles, and say their prayers before going to rest. Old Captain Skeggs, a wornout Revolutionary soldier, no longer good for hard service, had this commanding post in Poganuc, and no matter how high blew the wind, how fiercely raged the storm, the captain

in his white woolen greatcoat, with three little capes to it, stamped his way through the snow, pulled valiantly on the rope, and let all the hills and valleys of Poganuc know that the hour of rest had come. Then, if it were a young people's party, each young man chose out his maiden and asked the pleasure of seeing her home; and in the clear frosty night and under the silent stars many a word was said that could not be said by candle-light indoors, — whereof in time came lifelong results.

CHAPTER XIII

COLONEL DAVENPORT RELATES HIS EXPERIENCES

A FEW days after the tea-party, Colonel and Mrs. Davenport came to take tea at the parsonage. It was an engagement of long standing, and eagerly looked forward to by the children, who with one accord begged that they might be allowed to sit up and hear the colonel's stories. For stories of the war it was known the colonel could tell; the fame of them hovered in vague traditions on the hills and valleys of Poganuc, and whenever he was to be in the circle it was always in the programme of hope that he might be stimulated and drawn out to tell of some of the stirring scenes of his camp-life. In a general way, too, the children were always glad to have company. The preparations had a festive and joyous air to their minds. Mrs. Cushing then took possession of the kitchen in person, and various appetizing and suggestive dainties and condiments stood about in startling profusion. Dolly and the boys stoned raisins, pounded cinnamon, grated nutmegs, and beat eggs with enthusiasm, while Nabby heated the oven and performed the part of assistant priestess in high and solemn mysteries. Among her many virtues and graces, Mrs. Cushing had one recommendation for a country minister's wife which commanded universal respect: she could make cake. Yea, more, she could make such cake as nobody else could make — not even Colonel Davenport's Venus. So the children had stoned raisins, without eating more than the natural tribute to be expected in such cases; they had been allowed in perquisites a stick of cin-

namon apiece; and the pound-cake, the sponge-cake, the fruit-cake, and the tea-rusks were each in their kind a perfect success.

During tea-time every word uttered by the colonel was eagerly watched by attentive and much-desiring ears; but as yet no story came. The vivacity imparted by two or three cups of the best tea was all spent in denunciations of the Democrats, their schemes, designs, and dangers to the country, when the colonel and Dr. Cushing seemed to vie with each other in the vigor and intensity of their prognostications of evil. But after tea there came the genial hour of the social sit-down in front of the andirons, when the candles were duly snuffed, and the big forestick had burned down to glowing coals, and the shadows played in uncertain flashes up and down the walls of the fire-lighted room; and then the colonel's mind began traveling a road hopeful to his listening auditors. From Democracy to Jefferson, from Jefferson to France and the French Revolution, the conversation led by easy gradations, and thence to the superior success of our own Revolution — from Lafayette to Washington.

Now, the feeling of the doctor and of his whole family for General Washington was to the full as intense as that of the ancient Israelites for Moses. They were never tired of hearing the smallest particular about him — how he looked; how he walked; what he wore; the exact shade of his eyes; the least word that ever dropped from his lips.

"You have no doubt whatever that the general was a religious man?" said the doctor, propounding what was ever his most anxious inquiry with regard to one who had entered on the Invisible Verities.

"Not a doubt, sir," was the colonel's reply, in those ringing and decisive tones which were characteristic of him.

"I have always heard," pursued the doctor, "that he was eminently a man of prayer."

"Eminently so," said the colonel. "The general, sir, was a communicant in the Episcopal Church, a firm believer in Christianity, and I think he was sustained in all the trying emergencies of the war by his faith in his God. That, sir, I have not a doubt of."

"That has always been my belief," said the doctor; "but I am glad to hear you say so."

"Yes, sir," added the colonel, with energy; "his influence in the army was openly and decidedly that of a Christian. You recollect his general order at one time, excusing soldiers and sailors from fatigue-duty on Sunday, that they might have time to attend religious service, and his remarks upon the custom of profane swearing in the army; how he reminded both officers and men that 'we could have but little hope of the blessing of Heaven upon our arms, if we insult it by impiety.'"

"Yes, I remember all that," said the doctor. "Nothing could have been better worded. It must have had an immense influence. But does it not seem astonishing that a military man, going through the terrible scenes that he did, should never have been tempted to profanity? I declare," said the doctor musingly, "I would not answer for myself. There were times in that history when without preventing grace I am quite sure *I* could not have held myself in."

"Well, sir, since you speak on that subject," said the colonel, "I am free to say that on one occasion I saw our general carried beyond himself. I have often thought I would like to tell you the circumstances, doctor."

There was a little edging towards the colonel, both of the doctor and Mrs. Cushing, as the colonel, looking dreamily far into the hickory coals, said: —

"Yes, sir; that was one of those critical times in our war, when it turned on the events of a few hours whether we had been the nation we are now, or trodden down

under the British heel; whether Washington had been made President of the United States, or hanged for treason. It was at the time of the Long Island retreat."

"And you were there?" asked Dr. Cushing. The doctor knew very well that the colonel was there, and was eager to draw him out.

"There? Sir, indeed I was," answered the colonel. "I shall never forget it to my dying day. We had been fighting all day at terrible odds, our men falling all around us like leaves, and the British pressing close upon us; so close, that when it grew dark we could hear every movement in their camp, every sound of pick, or shovel, or gun. Our men had got behind their intrenchments, and there the enemy stopped pursuing. What a night that was! We were deadly tired — dispirited as only fellows can be that have seen their friends shot down about them; no tents, no shelter, and the sentries of the victorious enemy only a quarter of a mile from our lines. Nearly two thousand, out of the five thousand men we had in the fight, were killed, wounded, or missing. Well, it was a terribly anxious night for Washington; for what had we to expect, next day? He went round at four o'clock in the morning to see to us and speak a word of cheer here and there. It was a cold, drizzling, gloomy, rainy morning, but we could see through the fog a large encampment; and they were intrenching themselves, though the rain drove them into their tents. The day advanced, continuing rainy and stormy, and they made no move to attack us. Our scouts, that were out watching the motions of the enemy down at Red Hook, got a peep at the shipping at Staten Island, and saw at once that there was a movement and bustle there, as if there were something on foot; and they got the idea that the enemy were planning at turn of tide to come up behind us in the East River, and cut us off from the army in New York. Sir, that was

just what they were meaning to do; and if they had, we should have been caught there like rats in a trap, the war would have been ended, and Washington hanged. The party hurried back to tell the general. A council of war was held, and it was decided that we all must cross to New York that very night. There it was; nine thousand men, with all our baggage and artillery, to steal away in the night from that great army, and they so near that we could hear every dog that barked or man that whistled among them."

"How wide was the place to be crossed?" asked the doctor.

"Full three quarters of a mile, sir, and with a rapid tide sweeping through. As the Lord's providence would have it, Colonel Glover had just come in that day with his Marblehead regiment — thirteen hundred fishermen and sailors, such as the world cannot equal."

"Glorious!" exclaimed the doctor. "God bless the Marblehead boys!"

"Yes, they saved us, under God and the general; we never could have crossed without them.

"Well, the general sent to the quartermaster to impress all the boats and transports of every kind that could be got, and have them ready by evening. By eight o'clock they were all at Brooklyn, and under the management of the Marblehead regiment. Word was given out in the army to be prepared for a night attack, and the poor fellows, tired as they were, were all up and ready to move on order.

"Then Washington ordered General Mifflin's brigade, including what remained of our regiment, to stay and keep the intrenchments, with guards and patrols and sentinels posted, to make the enemy believe we were there, while the rest all moved down to the water and embarked.

"Now I tell you, sir, it was a good deal harder to stand

there than to be moving just then. We were wide awake and we counted the minutes. It is always longer to those who wait than to those who work. The men were true as steel, but, poor fellows, there is a limit to human endurance, and they got pretty restive and nervous. So, between you and me, did we officers, too. Standing still in such a danger is a thousand times worse than fighting.

"Finally the men began to growl and mutter; it was all we could do to hold them; they were sure the army had crossed — word *must* have been sent to them! So, finally, when Washington's aid misunderstood his order and came running to say that we were to move down, we started on the double-quick and got to the shore. There we found that the tide had turned, a strong northeast wind was blowing, the boats had been brought without oars enough to convey the troops, the sailboats were unable to make head against wind and tide, and full half the army were still on Long Island shore!

"Washington stood there amid the confusion and perplexity — when, in the midst of his troubles, down we all came.

"Sir, I never saw a mortal being look as General Washington looked at us. He ordered us back with a voice like thunder, and I never heard such a terrific volley of curses as he poured out upon us when the men hesitated. Sir, that man was so dreadful that we all turned and ran. We had rather face the judgment day than face him. Upon my soul, I thought when I turned back that I was going straight into eternity, but I had rather face death than him."

"And he swore?"

"Indeed he did — but it was not profane swearing; it was not taking God's name in vain, for it sent us back as if we had been chased by lightning It was an awful hour, and he saw it; it was life or death; country or no country."

"Sir," said Dr. Cushing, starting up and pacing the room, "it was the oath of the Lord! It would be profane to call it swearing."

"Yes, sir," said the colonel, "you remember that one time Moses threw down both tables of the law and broke them, and the Lord did not reprove him."

"Exactly," answered the doctor; "he saw his nation going to ruin and forgot all else to save them. The Lord knows how to distinguish."

"But, sir," said the colonel, "I never tell this except to the initiated. No man who saw Washington then dared ever to allude to it afterward. He was habitually so calm, so collected, so self-contained, that this outburst was the more terrific. Whatever he felt about it was settled between him and his Maker. No man ever took account with him."

Then followed a few moments of silence, when Dolly emerged from a dark corner — her cheeks very much flushed, her eyes very wide and bright — and pressing up to the colonel's knee, said eagerly, "But, oh please, sir, what became of you and the men?"

The colonel looked down and smiled as he lifted Dolly on his knee. "Why, my little girl, here I am, you see; I was n't killed after all."

"But did you really go clear back?" asked Dolly.

"Yes, my dear, we all went back and stayed two or three hours; and when it came morning we made believe to be the whole army. We made our fires, and we got our breakfasts, and we whistled and talked and made all the stir we could, but as the good Lord would have it there was such a thick fog that you could not see your hand before your face. You see that while the fog hung over the island and covered us, it was all clear down by the river."

"Why, that 's just the way it was when they crossed the Red Sea," said Dolly eagerly; "was n't it, papa?"

"Something so, my dear," said her father; but her mother made her a sign not to talk.

"How long did it take to do the whole thing?"

"Well, thanks to those Marblehead boys, by daybreak the greater part of the army were safe on the New York side. A little after daylight we marched off quietly and went down to the ferry. Washington was still there, and we begged him to go in the first boat; but no, he was immovable. He saw us all off, and went himself in the very last boat, after every man was in."

"What a glorious fellow!" said the doctor.

"Please, sir," said Will, who, with distended eyes, had been listening, "what did the British say when they found out?"

The colonel laid his head back and gave a hearty laugh.

"They had a message sent them, by a Tory woman down by the ferry, what was going on. She sent her black servant, and he got through our American lines, but was stopped by the Hessians, who could not understand his gibberish, and so kept him till long after all was over. Then a British officer overhauled him and was pretty well amazed at his story. He gave the alarm, and General Howe's aid-de-camp, with a body of men, climbed over the intrenchments and found all deserted. They hurried down to the landing just in time to see the rear boats half-way across the river."

"Well, that is *almost* like the crossing of the Red Sea," said the doctor.

"Oh, were n't the British furious!" cried Bill.

"Yes, they did fire away at the boats, and one straggling boat they hit and forced the men to return; but it turned out only three vagabonds that had come to plunder."

It was after the nine o'clock bell had dismissed the colonel and his lady that the doctor noticed the wide and radiant eyes of little Dolly and his boys.

"My children," he said, "to use the name of the great God solemnly and earnestly for a great and noble purpose is not to 'swear.' Swearing is taking God's holy name in vain, in a trifling way, for a trivial purpose — a thing which our great and good general never did. But this story I would rather you would never repeat. It might not be understood."

"Certainly," said Bill, with proud gravity; "common boys would n't understand — and, Dolly, don't you tell."

"Of course I should n't," said Dolly. "I never shall tell even Nabby, nor Bessie, nor anybody."

And afterwards, in the family circle, when General Washington was spoken of, the children looked on one another with grave importance, as the trusted depositaries of a state secret.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PUZZLE OF POGANUC

NOTWITHSTANDING the apparition of the bluebird and the sanguine hopes of the boys, the winter yet refused to quit the field. Where these early bluebirds go to, that come to cheer desponding hearts in arctic regions like Poganuc, is more than one can say. Birds' wings are wonderful little affairs, and may carry them many hundred southward miles in a day. Dolly, however, had her own theory about it, and that was that the bird went right up into heaven, and there waited till all the snowstorms were over. Certain it was that the Poganuc people, after two promising days of thaw, did not fall short of that "six weeks' sledding in March" which has come to be proverbial.

The thaw, which had dripped from icicles and melted from snowbanks, froze stiffer than ever, and then there came a two days' snowstorm — good, big, honest snow feathers, that fell and fell all day and all night, till all the houses wore great white nightcaps, the paths in front of all the house doors had to be shoveled out again, and the farmers with their sleds turned out to break roads. The doctor was planning a tour in his sleigh to fulfill his monthly round of visiting the schools. Schools there always were in every district, from the time the first log schoolhouse had been erected in the forests, down to the days when, as now, the schoolhouse is a comfortable, well-furnished building.

In the doctor's day the common schoolhouses were

little, mean shanties, built in the cheapest possible manner, consisting of one small room and a vestibule for hanging bonnets, hats, and dinner-baskets. In winter a box stove, the pipe of which passed through one of the windows, gave warmth. Blackboards were unknown. The teacher's care was simply to hear reading in the Bible and the "Columbian Orator;" to set copies in ruled copy-books; to set "sums" from Daboll's "Arithmetic;" to teach parsing from Murray's "Grammar;" to mend pens, and to ferule and thrash disorderly scholars. In the summer months, when the big boys worked in the fields, a woman generally held sway, and taught knitting and sewing to the girls. On Saturday all recited the "Assembly's Catechism," and once a month the minister, and sometimes his wife, came in to hear and commend the progress of the scholars.

One of the troubles of a minister in those times was so to hold the balance as to keep down neighborhood quarrels; — not an easy matter among a race strong, opinionated, and who, having little variety in life, rather liked the stimulus of disagreements. A good quarrel was a sort of moral whetstone, always on hand for the sharpening of their wits. Such a quarrel had stood for some two or three years past in regard to the position of the North Poganuc schoolhouse. It had unfortunately been first located on a high, slippery, windy hill, very uncomfortable of access in the winter months, and equally hot and cheerless in summer. Subsequently, the building of several new farmhouses had carried most of the children a considerable distance away, and occasioned increased sense of inconvenience.

The thing had been talked of and discussed in several successive town-meetings, but no vote could be got to change the position of the schoolhouse. Zeph Higgins was one of the most decided in stating what ought to be done

and where the schoolhouse ought to stand; but unfortunately, Zeph's mode of arguing a question was such as to rouse all the existing combativeness in those whom he sought to convince. No more likely mode to ruin a motion in town-meeting than to get Zeph interested to push it. In Poganuc, as elsewhere, there were those in town-meeting that voted on the principle stated by the immortal Bird-o'-Fredum Sawin: —

> "I take the side that is n't took
> By them consarned teetotalers."

In the same manner, Zeph's neighbors were for the most part inclined in town-meeting, irrespective of any other consideration, to take the side he did n't take. Hiel Jones had often been heard to express the opinion that "ef Zeph Higgins would jest shet up his gash in town-meetin', that 'ere schoolhouse could be moved fast enough; but the minit that Dr. Cushing had been round, and got folks kind o' slicked down and peaceable, Zeph would git up and stroke 'em all back'ards and git their dander up agin. Folks warn't a-goin' to be druv; and Zeph was allers fer drivin'."

The subject of an approaching town-meeting was beginning to loom dimly in the discussions of the village. One characteristic of the Yankee mind, as developed in those days, was the slowness and deliberation with which it arrived at any purpose or conclusion. This was not merely in general movements, but in particular ones also. Did the Widow Brown contemplate turning her back buttery into a sink-room, she forthwith went over to the nearest matrons of her vicinity, and announced that she was "talkin' about movin' her sink," and the movement in all its branches and bearings was discussed in private session. That was step No. 1. Then all the women at the next quilting or tea-drinking heard that Widow Brown was "talking about changing her sink," and *they*

talked about it. Then Seth Chickering, the neighborhood carpenter, was called into consultation, and came and investigated the premises, and reported — first to the widow and second to his wife, who told all the other women what "Seth, he said," etc. The *talking* process continued indefinitely, unless some active providential dispensation brought it to an end.

The same process was repeated when Mrs. Slocum thought of investing in a new winter cloak; the idea in those days prevailing that a winter cloak was a thing never but once in a lifetime to be bought, and after that to endure for all generations, the important article must not be bought lightly or unadvisedly. When Deacon Dickenson proposed to build a new back parlor on his house and to reshingle the roof, the talking and discussion lasted six months, and threw the whole neighborhood into commotion; carpenters came before daybreak and roosted on the fences, and at odd times as they found leisure, at all hours of the day, gathered together, and Seth Chickering took the opinions of Sam Parmelee and Jake Peters; and all Mrs. Dickenson's female friends talked about it, till every shingle, every shingle-nail, and every drop of paint had received a separate consideration, and the bargain was, so to speak, whittled down to the finest possible point.

Imagine the delicacies of discussion, then, that attended the moving of a schoolhouse at the public expense — a schoolhouse in which everybody in the neighborhood had a private and personal claim — and how like the proceedings of a bull in a china-shop was the advocacy of a champion like Zeph Higgins, and one may see how infinitely extended in this case might be the area of "talkin' about movin' that 'ere schoolhouse," and how hopelessly distant any decision. The thing had already risen on the horizon of Deacon Dickenson's store, like one of those puzzling stars or fractiously disposed heavenly bodies that seem

created to furnish astronomers with something to talk about.

The fateful period was again coming round; the spring town-meeting was at hand, and more than one had been heard to say that "ef that 'ere schoolhouse hed to be moved, it oughter be done while the sleddin' was good." In Deacon Dickenson's store a knot of the talkers were gathered around the stove, having a final talk and warm-up previous to starting their sleds homeward to their supper of pork and beans and doughnuts. Our mournful friend, Deacon Peasley, sat in his usual drooping attitude on a mackerel-keg placed conveniently by the stove; and then, like Beattie's hermit,

> " . . . his plaining begun.
> Tho' mournful his spirit, his soul was resigned."

"I 'm sure I hope I don't wanter dictate to the Lord, nor nothin', but *ef* he should send a turn o' rheumatism on Zeph Higgins, jest afore town-meetin' day — why, seems to me 't would be a marcy to us all."

"I don't see, fer my part," said Tim Hawkins, "why folks need to mind what he says; but they do. He 'll do more *agin* a motion talkin' *fer* it than I can do talkin' agin it fer a year. I never see the beat of him — never."

"Ain't there nobody," said Deacon Peasley, caressing his knee, and looking fondly at the stove door, "that could kind o' go to him, and sort o' set it in order afore him how he henders the very thing he 's sot on doin' ?"

"Guess you don't know him as I do," said Deacon Dickenson, "or you would n't 'a' thought o' that."

"And now he 's gone in with the Democrats, and agin Parson Cushing and the church, it 'll be worse 'n ever," remarked Tim Hawkins.

"Now, there 's Mis' Higgins," said the deacon; "she can't do nothin' with him; he won't take a word from her; she hez to step round softly arter him, a-settin'

things right. Why, Widder Brown, that lives up by the huckleberry pastur' lot, was a-tellin' my wife, last Sunday, how Zeph's turkeys would come a-trampin' in her mowin', and all she could say and do he would n't keep 'em to hum. And then when they stole a nest there, Zeph he took the eggs and carried 'em off, 'cause he said the turkeys was his'n. Mis' Higgins, she jest put on her bonnet, and went right over, that arternoon, and took the turkey eggs back to the widder. Mis' Brown said Mis' Higgins did n't *say* a word, but she *looked* consid'able — her eyes was a-shinin' and her mouth sort o' set, as ef she 'd about come to the eend of her patience."

"Wal," said Deacon Peasley, "I rather wonder she durst to do it."

"Wal," said Tim, "my wife sez that there *is* places where Mis' Higgins jest takes her stand, and Zeph has to give in. Ef she gets her back agin a text in the Bible, why, she won't stir from it ef he killed her; and when it comes to that Zeph hez to cave in. Come to standin' — why she kin stand longer 'n he kin. I rather 'xpect he did n't try to git back them turkey eggs. Ef he did, Mis' Higgins would 'a' stood right in the road, and he 'd 'a' hed to 'a' walked over her. I 'xpect by this time Zeph knows what he kin make her do and what he can't."

"Wal," said Hiel Jones, who had just dropped in, "I tell ye, Zeph 's screwed himself into a tight place now. That 'ere 'Piscopal parson, he 's gret on orderin' and commandin', and thinks he did n't come right down from the 'Postles for nothin'. He puts his new folks through the drills lively, I tell ye; he 's ben at old Zeph 'cause he don't bow to suit him in the Creed — Zeph's back is stiff as a ramrod, and he jest hates it. Now, there 's Mis' Higgins; *she 'll* allers do anything to 'blige anybody, and if the minister wants her to make a curtsy, why, she does it the best she 's able, and Nabby and the boys, they take

to it; but it gravels Zeph. Then all this 'ere gittin' up and sittin' down aggravates him, and he comes out o' church as cross as a bull in fly-time."

Of course, the laugh was ready at this picture of their neighbor's troubles, and Hiel added: —

"He 'll put it through, though; he won't go back on his tracks, but it 's pikery and wormwood to him, I tell ye. I saw him t'other day, after parson had been speaking to him, come out o' church, and give his hoss such a twitch, and say 'Darn ye!' in a way I knew wa'n't meant for the *critter*. Zeph don't swear," added Hiel, "but I will say he can make *darn* sound the most like *damn* of any man in Poganuc. He 's got lots o' swear in him, that ole feller hez."

"My mother says she remembers when Polly Higgins (that is) was the prettiest gal in all the deestrict," said Deacon Peasley. "She was Polly Adams, from Danbury. She came to keep the deestrict school, and Zeph he sot his eyes on her, and hev her he would; he would n't take 'No' for an answer; he did n't give her no peace till he got her."

"Any feller can get a gal that way," said Hiel, with a judicial air. "A gal allers says 'No' at fust — to get time to think on 't."

"Is that the way with Nabby?" asked the deacon, with a wink of superior intelligence. Whereat there came a general laugh, and Hiel pulled up his coat-collar, and looking as if he might say something if delicacy did not forbid, suddenly remembered that "mother had sent him for a quarter of a pound o' young Hyson."

Definite business at once broke up the session, and every man, looking out his parcels, mounted his sled and wended his way home.

CHAPTER XV

THE POGANUC PUZZLE SOLVED

Zeph Higgins had the spirit of a general. He, too, had his vision of an approaching town-meeting, and that evening, sitting in his family circle, gave out his dictum on the subject: —

"Wal — they 'll hev a town-meetin' afore long, and hev up that 'ere old school'us' bizness," he said, as he sat facing the blaze of the grand kitchen fire.

Mrs. Higgins sat by in her little splint-bottomed rocking-chair, peacefully clicking her knitting-needles. Abner sat at her right hand, poring over a volume of Rollin's "Ancient History." Abel and Jeduthun were playing fox-and-geese with grains of corn in the corner, and Tim was whittling a goose-poke. All looked up at the announcement of this much-bruited subject.

"They never seem to come to anything on that subject," said Mrs. Higgins. "I wish the schoolhouse was better situated; a great many are kept from the prayer-meetings there that would come if it was n't for that windy, slippery hill. The last time I went, it was all I could do to get up," she said; "and I thought I caught a cold."

"There 's not the least doubt on 't," said Zeph, "and the children are allers catchin' colds. Everybody knows where that 'ere school'us' ought to be. Confounded fools they be, the hull lot on 'em; and, for my part, I 'm tired o' this 'ere quarrelin' and jawin', and I ain't a-goin' to stan' it no longer. It 's a shame and it 's a sin to keep up

these 'ere quarrels among neighbors, and I 'm a'-goin' to put a stop to it."

It may be imagined that this exordium caused a sensation in the family circle. Mrs. Higgins opened her meek blue eyes upon her husband with a surprised expression; the two boys sat with their game suspended and their mouths open, and the goose-poke and Rollin's "History" were alike abandoned in the pause of astonishment.

"To-morrow 's Saturday," said Zeph; "and Saturday afternoon there won't be no school, and I 'll jest take the boys, both yoke of oxen and the sleds, and go up and move that 'ere school'us' down to the place where 't orter be. I 'll wedge it up and settle it good and firm, and that 'll be the end on 't. 'T ain't no sort o' use to talk. I 'm jest a-goin' to do it."

Zeph looked as if he meant it, and his family had ceased to think anything impossible that he took in hand to do. If he had announced his intention of blowing up the neighboring crag of Bluff Head, and building a castle out of the fragments, they would have expected to see it done. So Zeph took the family Bible, and in a high-pitched and determined voice, read the account of Samson carrying off the gates of Gaza, repeated his evening prayer, ordered all hands to bed, raked up the fire, had all snug and quiet, and stepped into bed just as the last stroke of the nine o'clock bell was resounding.

At four o'clock the next afternoon, as Hiel Jones was coming in on his high seat on the Poganuc stage, whistling cheerily, a sudden new sensation struck him. Passing over North Poganuc hill, he bethought him of the schoolhouse question, and lifted up his eyes, and lo! no schoolhouse was there. For a moment Hiel felt giddy. What was the matter with his head? He rubbed his eyes, and looked on all the other familiar objects; there was the old pine-tree, there the great rock, but the schoolhouse was gone.

The place where it had stood was disturbed by tramping of many feet, and a broad, smooth trail led down the hill.

"Wal, somebody hez gone and ben and done it," said Hiel, as he whipped up his horses to carry the news. Farther on, in a convenient spot at the junction of three roads, under the shelter of a hill, stood the schoolhouse — serene as if it had grown there; while Zeph Higgins and his son Abner were just coming forward on the road toward Hiel, Zeph triumphantly whipping his oxen and shouting the word of command in an elevated voice. Hiel drew to one side, and gave a long whistle. "Je-*ru*-salem," he exclaimed, "ef you hain't ben and done it!"

Zeph lifted his head with an air of as much satisfaction as his hard features could assume, and nodding his head in the direction of the schoolhouse, said: —

"Yis — there 't is!"

Hiel laid his head back, and burst into a loud, prolonged laugh, in which he was joined by Abner and the boys.

"Don't see nothin' to laugh at," said Zeph, with grim satisfaction. "Fact is, I can't hev these 'ere quarrels — and I won't hev 'em. That 'ere 's the place for that school'us', and it 's *got* to stand there, and that 's the eend on 't. Come, boys, hurry home; mother's beans will be a-gettin' cold. Gee — g'lang!" and the black whip cracked over the back of the ox-team.

Hiel was a made man. He had in possession an astounding piece of intelligence, that nobody knew but himself, and he meant to make the most of it. He hurried first to Deacon Peasley's store, where quite a number were sitting round the stove with their Saturday night purchases. In burst Hiel: —

"Wal, that 'ere North Poganuc school'us' is *moved*, and settled down under the hill by the cross-roads."

The circle looked for a moment perfectly astounded and stupefied.

"You don't say so!"

"Dew tell!"

"Don't believe ye."

"Wal, ye kin all go and see. I came by, jest half an hour ago, and see it with my own eyes, and Zeph Higgins and his boys a-drivin' off with their sleds and oxen. I tell ye, that 'ere thing is jest *done*. I 'm a-goin' to tell Dr. Cushing's folks."

Poganuc people had something to talk about now, in good earnest.

Hiel stopped his stage at the parson's door; and Dr. Cushing, expecting some bundle from Boston, came out to the gate.

"Doctor, thought I 'd jest stop and tell ye that the North Poganuc school'us' hez ben moved to the cross-roads, down under the hill — thought ye 'd like to hear it."

The doctor's exclamation and uplifted hands brought to the door Mrs. Cushing and Dolly and the two boys, with Nabby. Hiel was in his glory, and recounted all the circumstances with great prolixity, the doctor and Mrs. Cushing and all his audience laughing at his vigorous narrative.

"Yis," said Hiel, "he said he wa'n't a-goin' to hev no more quarrelin' about it; everybody knew the school'us' ought to be there, and there 't was. It was all wedged up tight and stiddy, and the stove in it, and the pipe stickin' out o' the winder, all nateral as could be, and he jest goin' off home, as ef nothin' hed happened."

"Well, if that ain't jest like father!" exclaimed Nabby, with an air of pride. "If he wants a thing done he will do it."

"Certainly this time he has done a good thing," said the doctor, "and for my part I 'm obliged to him. I suppose the spirit of the Lord came on him, as it did on Samson."

And for weeks and months thereafter there was abundance of talking and every variety of opinion expressed as to the propriety of Zeph's *coup d'état*, but nobody, man, woman, or child, ever proposed to move the schoolhouse back again.

CHAPTER XVI

THE POGANUC PARSONAGE

THE parsonage was a wide, roomy, windy edifice that seemed to have been built by a succession of afterthoughts. It was at first a model New England house, built around a great brick chimney, which ran up like a lighthouse in the centre of the square roof. Then came, in course of time, a side wing which had another chimney and another suite of rooms. A kitchen grew out on another side, and out of the kitchen a sink-room, and out of the sink-room a wood-house, and out of the wood-house a carriage-house, and so on with a gradually lessening succession of out-buildings.

New England houses have been said by a shrewd observer to be constructed on the model of a telescope; compartment after compartment, lessening in size, and all under one cover. But in the climate where the business of one half of the year is to provide fuel for the other half, such a style of domestic architecture becomes convenient. During the long winter months everything was under cover, giving grand scope for the children to play. When the boys were graciously disposed to Dolly, she had a deal of good fun with them in the long range of the divers sheds. They made themselves houses, castles, and fortresses in the woodpile, and played at giving parties and entertainments, at which Spring and the cat also assisted in silent and subsidiary parts.

Sometimes they held town-meetings or voting-days, in which the Democrats got their dues in speeches that might

have struck terror to their souls had they heard them. At other times they held religious meetings, and sung hymns and preached, on which occasions Dolly had been known to fall to exhorting with a degree of fervor and a fluency in reciting texts of Scripture which for the time produced quite an effect on her auditors, and led Nabby, who listened behind the door, to say to Mrs. Cushing that "that 'ere child was smarter than was good for her; that she 'd either die young or else come to suthin' one of these days" — a proposition as to which there could not rationally be any difference of opinion.

The parsonage had also the advantage of three garrets — splendid ground for little people. There was first the garret over the kitchen, the floors of which in the fall were covered with stores of yellow pumpkins, fragrant heaps of quinces, and less fragrant spread of onions. There were bins of shelled corn and of oats, and, as in every other garret in the house, there were also barrels of old sermons and old family papers. But most stimulating to the imagination of all the features of this place was the smoke-house, which was a wide, deep chasm made in the kitchen chimney, where the parson's hams and dried beef were cured. Its door, which opened into this garret, glistened with condensed creosote, a rumbling sound was heard there, and loud crackling reverberated within. Sometimes Dolly would open the door and peer in fearfully as long as her eyes could bear the smoke, and think with a shudder of a certain passage in John Bunyan, which reads: —

"Then I saw in my dream that the shepherds had them to another place, in a bottom, where was a door in the side of a hill; and they opened the door and bid them look in. They looked in, therefore, and saw that within it was dark and smoky; they also thought that they heard a rumbling noise as of fire and a cry of some tormented, and that they smelt the scent of brimstone. Then said Chris-

tian, What means this? The shepherds told them, This is a byway to Hell, a way that hypocrites go in at, namely, such as sell their birthright with Esau; such as sell their Master with Judas; such as lie and dissemble with Ananias and Sapphira his wife."

Dolly shivered when she thought of this, and was glad when Nabby would come up behind and with her strong hands seize and whirl her away, remarking: —

"Dolly Cushing, *what* won't you be into next, I want ter know?" And then she would proceed to demonstrate the mundane character of the receptacle by drawing from it a very terrestrial and substantial ham.

Garret number two was over the central portion of the original house. There were vast heaps of golden corn on the cob, spread upon sheets. There were piles of bed-quilts and comforters, and chests of blankets. There were rows and ranges of old bonnets and old hats, that seemed to nod mysteriously from their nails. There were old spinning-wheels, an old clock, old armchairs, and old pictures, snuffy and grim, and more barrels of sermons. There also were the boys' cabinets of mineralogical specimens; for the Academy teacher was strong on geology, and took his boys on long tramps with stone-hammers on their shoulders, and they used to discuss with great unction to Dolly of tourmaline and hornblende and mica and quartz and feldspar, delighted to exhibit before her their scientific superiority.

This garret was a favorite resort of the children, and the laws of the parsonage requiring everything to be always in order were conveniently mitigated and abridged in favor of this one spot, where it was so convenient to let the whole noisy brood range when their presence disturbed the order below. There the boys whittled and made windmills and boats and rabbit-traps, and whistles with which they whistled grievously at unexpected and startling

moments, and this always led to their mother telling them that she was "astonished" at them, or to her asking, How many times she must say whistling was *not* allowed in the house?

Perhaps among other subjects of speculative inquiry it may have occurred to Mrs. Cushing to wonder why nature, having gifted boys in their own proper lungs with such noise-producing power, should also come to their assistance with so many noise-producing instruments. There were all the squash-vines in the garden offering trumpets ready made; there was the elder bush, growing whistle-wood by the yard; and then the gigantic whistles that could be manufactured from willow and poplar and black alder were mysteries distressing to contemplate.

One corner of the garret was reserved safe from the rummaging of the children, and there hung in order the dried herbs, which formed the pharmacopœia of those early days. There were catnip and boneset and elder blow and hardhack and rosemary and tansy and penny-royal, all gathered at the right time of the moon, dried and sorted and tied in bundles, hanging from their different nails — those canonized floral saints, which when living filled the air with odors of health and sweetness, and whose very mortal remains and dry bones were supposed to have healing virtues. Some of Dolly's happiest hours were those long sunny, joyous, Saturday afternoons in which many of these stores were gathered, when she rushed through the lush, long grass, along the borders of mossy old stone fences, and pulled down starry constellations of elder blossoms, and gathered pink spires of hardhack, till her little arms could scarcely clasp around the bundle. Then she would rush home panting and energetic, with torn dress, her sunbonnet off on her shoulder, and curls all tangled from the wrestles with blackberry bushes which had disputed the way with her. This corner of the garret

always filled Dolly's head with visions and longings for the late, slow-coming spring, which seemed far off as the dream of heaven.

Then those barrels of sermons and old pamphlets! Dolly had turned and turned them, upsetting them on the floor, and pawing helplessly with her little pink hands and reading their titles with amazed eyes. It seemed to her that there were some thousands of the most unintelligible things. "An Appeal on the Unlawfulness of a Man's Marrying his Wife's Sister" turned up in every barrel she investigated, by twos or threes or dozens, till her soul despaired of finding an end. Then there were Thanksgiving sermons; Fast Day sermons; sermons that discoursed on the battle of Culloden; on the character of Frederick the Great; a sermon on the death of George the Second, beginning, "George! George! George is no more." This somewhat dramatic opening caused Dolly to put that one discourse into her private library. But oh, joy and triumph! one rainy day she found at the bottom of an old barrel a volume of the "Arabian Nights," and henceforth her fortune was made. Dolly had no idea of reading like that of our modern days — to read and to dismiss a book. No; to read was with her a passion, and a book once read was read daily; always becoming dearer and dearer, as an old friend. The "Arabian Nights" transported her to foreign lands, gave her a new life of her own; and when things went astray with her, when the boys went to play higher than she dared to climb in the barn, or started on fishing excursions, where they considered her an incumbrance, then she found a snug corner, where, curled up in a little, quiet lair, she could at once sail forth on her bit of enchanted carpet into fairy-land.

One of these resorts was furnished by the third garret of the house, which had been finished off into an arched room and occupied by her father as a study. High above

all the noise of the house, with a window commanding a view of Poganuc Lake and its girdle of steel-blue pines, this room had to her the air of a refuge and sanctuary. Its walls were set round from floor to ceiling with the friendly, quiet faces of books, and there stood her father's great writing-chair, on one arm of which lay open always his Cruden's "Concordance" and his Bible. Here Dolly loved to retreat and niche herself down in a quiet corner, with her favorite books around her. She had a kind of sheltered, satisfied feeling as she thus sat and watched her father writing, turning his books, and speaking from time to time to himself in a loud, earnest whisper. She vaguely felt that he was about some holy and mysterious work above her little comprehension, and she was careful never to disturb him by question or remark.

The books ranged around filled her, too, with a solemn awe. There on the lower shelves were great enormous folios, on whose backs she spelled in black letters, "Lightfooti Opera," a title whereat she marveled, considering the bulk of the volumes. And overhead, grouped along in friendly and sociable rows, were books of all sorts and sizes and bindings, the titles of which she had read so often that she knew them by heart. Bell's "Sermons," Bonnett's "Inquiries," Bogue's "Essays," Toplady on "Predestination," Boston's "Fourfold State," Law's "Serious Call," and other works of that kind she had looked over wistfully, day after day, without getting even a hope of something interesting out of them. The thought that her father could read and could understand things like these filled her with a vague awe, and she wondered if ever she should be old enough to know what it was all about. But there was one of her father's books which proved a mine of wealth to her. It was a happy hour when he brought home and set up in his bookcase Cotton Mather's "Magnalia," in a new edition of two volumes. What

wonderful stories these! and stories, too, about her own country, stories that made her feel that the very ground she trod on was consecrated by some special dealing of God's providence.

When the good doctor related how a plague that had wasted the Indian tribes had prepared the room for the Pilgrim Fathers to settle undisturbed, she felt nowise doubtful of his application of the text, "He drave out the heathen and planted them."

But who shall describe the large-eyed, breathless wonder with which she read stories of witchcraft, with its weird marvels of mysterious voices heard in lonely places, of awful visitations that had overtaken sinners, and immediate deliverances that had come in answer to the prayers of God's saints? Then, too, the stories of Indian wars and captivities, when the war-whoop had sounded at midnight, and little children like her had awakened to find the house beset with legions of devils, who set fire to the dwellings and carried the people off through dreary snow and ice to Canada. No Jewish maiden ever grew up with a more earnest faith that she belonged to a consecrated race, a people especially called and chosen of God for some great work on earth. Her faith in every word of the marvels related in this book was full as great as the dear old credulous Dr. Cotton Mather could have desired.

But the mysterious areas of the parsonage were not exhausted with its three garrets. Under the whole house in all its divisions spread a great cavernous cellar, where were murky rooms and dark passages explored only by the light of candles. There were rows of bins, in which were stored the apples of every name and race harvested in autumn from the family orchard: Pearmains, Greenings, Seek-no-furthers, Bristers, Pippins, Golden Sweets, and other forgotten kinds, had each a separate bin, to which the children at all times had free access. There, too, was

a long row of cider barrels, from whence, in the hour of their early sweetness, Dolly had delighted to suck the cider through straws for that purpose carefully selected and provided.

Not without a certain awe was her descent into this shadowy Avernus, generally under the protecting wing of Nabby or one of the older boys. Sometimes, with the perverse spirit which moves the male nature to tyrannize over the weaker members, they would agonize her by running beyond her into the darker chambers of the cellar, and sending thence Indian war-whoops and yells which struck terror to her soul, and even mingled their horrors with her dreams. But there was one class of tenants whose influence and presence in the house must not be omitted — and that was the rats. They had taken formal possession of the parsonage, grown, bred, and multiplied, and become ancient there, in spite of traps or cats or anything that could be devised against them.

The family cat in Dolly's day, having taken a dispassionate survey of the situation, had given up the matter in despair, and set herself quietly to attending to her own family concerns, as a sensible cat should. She selected the doctor's pamphlet closet as her special domestic retreat. Here she made her lair in a heap of old sermons, whence, from time to time, she led forth coveys of well-educated, theological kittens, who, like their mother, gazed on the rats with respectful curiosity, and ran no imprudent risks. Consequently, the rats had a glorious time in the old parsonage. Dolly, going up the kitchen stairs into the back garret, as she did on her way bedward, would see them sitting easy and *dégagés* on the corners of boxes and bins, with their tails hanging gracefully down, engaged in making meals on the corn or oats. They ramped all night on the floor of the highest garret over her sleeping-room, apparently busy in hopping with ears of corn across the

garret and then rolling them down between the beams to their nests below. Sometimes Dolly heard them gnawing and sawing behind the very wainscot of her bed as if they had set up a carpenter's shop there, and she shrunk apprehensively for fear they were coming through into her bed. Then there were battles and skirmishes and squealings and fightings, and at times it would appear as if whole detachments of rats rolled in an avalanche down the walls with the corn they had been stealing. And when the mighty winter winds of Poganuc Mountain were out, and rumbled and thundered, roaring and tumbling down this chimney, rattling all the windows and creaking all the doors, while the beams of the house wrenched and groaned like a ship at sea, and the house seemed to shake on its very foundations, — then the uproar among the rats grew higher and jollier; and with all put together, it is not surprising that sometimes Dolly put the bedclothes over her head in fear, or ran and jumped into Nabby's warm arms for protection.

We have dwelt thus long on the old parsonage because it was a silent influence, every day fashioning the sensitive, imaginative little soul that was growing up in its own sphere of loneliness there. For Mrs. Cushing had, besides Dolly, other children who engaged her thoughts and care. The eldest a son, studying for the ministry; the second a daughter, married and settled in a distant part of the state; another son working as teacher to pay his past college expenses; another son in college, whose bills, clothing, books, and necessary expenses formed constant items of thought, study, and correspondence; so that, with the two boys in the Academy and our little Dolly, she had heart and hands full, and small time to watch all the fancies and dreams that drifted through that little head as clouds through summer skies. Satisfied that the child was healthy, and that there was no positive danger or harm to be fallen into, she dismissed her from her thoughts, except

in the way of general supervision. Yet every day, as the little maiden grew, some quaint, original touch was put to the forming character by these surroundings. As to Dolly's father, he was a worthy representative of that wise and strong Connecticut clergy that had the wisdom immediately to face a change in the growth of society, to lay down gracefully a species of power they could no longer wield, and to take up and exercise, and strengthen themselves in, a kind of power that could never be taken from them. Privileged orders of society are often obstructionists, because they do not know, in the day of it, the things that belong to their peace.

The Connecticut and New England clergy did not thus err. When the theocracy had passed away, they spent no time lamenting it. They let the cocked hat, gold-headed cane, gown and bands go down-stream; they let all laws protecting their order go by; and addressed themselves simply to the work of leading their people, as men with men, only by seeking to be stronger, wiser, and better men. To know more, to have more faith in the Invisible and Eternal, to be able to argue more logically to convince and to persuade — these were now their ambition. Dr. Cushing was foremost in this new crusade of earnestness. He determined to preach more and preach better than ever he had done before; and consequently in his wide parish, which covered a square of about ten miles, he was every day preaching, visiting, attending prayer-meetings. Often his wife was with him, and this gave Dolly many hours when she was free to follow her own little pursuits, and to pick up at the chimney-corner some of the traditionary lore of the period.

CHAPTER XVII

SPRING AND SUMMER COME AT LAST

But at last — at last — spring did come at Poganuc! This marvel and mystery of the new creation *did* finally take place there every year, in spite of every appearance to the contrary. Long after the bluebird that had sung the first promise had gone back into his own celestial ether, the promise that he sang was fulfilled. Like those sweet, foreseeing spirits, that on high, bare treetops of human thought pour forth songs of hope in advance of their age and time, our bluebird was gifted with the sure spirit of prophecy; and though the winds were angry and loud, though snows lay piled and deep for long weeks after, though ice and frost and hail armed themselves in embattled forces, yet the sun behind them all kept shining and shining, every day longer and longer, every day drawing nearer and nearer, till the snows passed away like a bad dream, and the brooks woke up and began to laugh and gurgle, and the ice went out of the ponds. Then the pussy-willows threw out their soft catkins, and the ferns came up with their woolly hoods on, like prudent old housemothers, looking to see if it was yet time to unroll their tender greens, and the white blossoms of the shad blow and the tremulous tags of the birches and alders shook themselves gayly out in the woods. Then under brown rustling leaf-banks came the white waxy shells of the trailing arbutus with its pink buds, fair as a winter's dawn on snow; then the blue and white hepaticas opened their eyes, and cold, sweet white violets starred the moist

edges of watercourses, and great blue violets opened large eyes in the shadows, and the white and crimson trilliums unfurled under the flickering lacework shadows of the yet leafless woods; the red columbine waved its bells from the rocks, and great tufts of golden cowslips fringed the borders of the brooks. Then came in flocks the delicate wind-flower family: anemones, starry white, and the crowfoot, with its pink outer shell, and the spotted adder's-tongue, with its waving yellow bells of blossom. Then, too, the honest, great green leaves of the old skunk-cabbage, most refreshing to the eye in its hardy, succulent greenness, though an abomination to the nose of the ill-informed who should be tempted to gather them. In a few weeks the woods, late so frozen, — hopelessly buried in snowdrifts, — were full of a thousand beauties and delicacies of life and motion, and flowers bloomed on every hand. "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth."

And, not least, the opening season had set free the imprisoned children; and Dolly and the boys, with Spring at their heels, had followed the courses of the brooks and the rippling brown shallows of Poganuc River for many a blissful hour, and the parsonage had everywhere been decorated with tumblers and teacups holding floral offerings of things beautiful at the time they were gathered, but becoming rather a matter of trial to the eye of exact housekeeping. Yet both Mrs. Cushing and Nabby had a soft heart for Dolly's flowers, sharing themselves the general sense of joy for the yearly deliverance of which they were the signs and seals. And so the work of renewing the face of the earth went on from step to step. The forest hills around Poganuc first grew misty with a gentle haze of pink and lilac, which in time changed to green and then to greener shades, till at last the full-clothed hills stood forth in the joy of re-creation, and, as of old, "all the trees of the field clapped their hands."

Poganuc in its summer dress was a beautiful place. Its main street had a row of dignified white houses, with deep dooryards and large side gardens, where the great scarlet peony flamed forth, where were generous tufts of white lilies, with tall spires of saintly blossoms, and yellow lilies with their faint sweet perfume, and all the good old orthodox flowers of stately family and valid pretensions. In all the dooryards and along the grassy streets on either side were overshadowing, long-branching trees, forming a roof of verdure, a green upper world from whose recesses birds dropped down their songs in languages unknown to us mortals. Who shall interpret what is meant by the sweet jargon of robin and oriole and bobolink, with their endless reiterations? Something wiser, perhaps, than we dream of in our lower life here.

Not a bit, however, did Hiel Jones trouble his head on this subject as he came in on his high stage-seat in lordly style on the evening of the 3d of July. Far other cares were in Hiel's head, for to-morrow was the glorious Fourth, — the only really secular fête known to the Yankee mind, — and a great celebration thereof had been resolved on by the magnates of Poganuc, and Hiel was captain of the Poganuc Rangers — a flourishing militia company which was to be the ornament of the forthcoming celebration.

It had been agreed for that time to drop all political distinctions. Federalists and Democrats, Town Hill folk and outside folk, were all of one mind and spirit to make this a celebration worthy of Poganuc Centre and the great cause of American Independence. A veritable cannon had been hauled up upon the village green and fired once or twice to relieve the bursting impatience of the boys and men who had helped put it there. The flag with its stars and stripes was already waving from the top of the court house, and a platform was being put up in the meeting-house, and people were running this way and that, and

standing in house doors, and talking with each other over fences, in a way that showed that something was impending. Hiel sprang from his box, and after attending to his horses, speedily appeared on the green to see to things — for how could the celebration to-morrow be properly presented without Hiel's counsels?

"Look here, now, boys," he said to the group assembled around the cannon, "don't be a-burnin' out yer powder. Keep it for to-morrow. Let her be now; ye don't want to keep bangin' and bangin' afore the time. To-morrow mornin' we 'll let 'er rip bright and early, and wake all the folks. Clear out, now, and go home to yer suppers, and don't be a-blowin' yerselves up with powder so that ye can't see the show to-morrow."

Hiel then proceeded into the meeting-house and criticised proceedings there.

"Look here, Jake, you jest stretch that 'ere carpet a leetle forrard; ye see, ye want the most out in front where 't shows; back there, why, the chairs and table 'll kiver it; it ain't so much matter. Wonder now ef them 'ere boards is firm? Would n't do, lettin' on 'em all down into the pews in the midst on 't. Look here, Seth Chickering, ye need another prop under there; ye hain't calkerlated for the heft o' them fellers — governors and colonels and ministers weighs putty heavy, and there ain't no glory in a gineral smash-up, and we 're a-goin' in for glory to-morrow; we 're goin' to sarve it out clear, and no mistake."

Hiel was a general favorite; his word of criticism was duly accepted, and things were pretty comfortably adjusted to his mind when he went home to eat his supper and try on his regimentals. The dry, hard, colorless life of a Yankee boy in those days found some relief in the periods called "training-days," when the militia assembled in uniform and marched and drilled to the sound of fife and

drum. Hiel had expended quite a round sum upon his uniform, and was not insensible to the transformation which it wrought in his personal appearance. The Widow Jones kept his gold-laced cocked hat, his bright gold epaulets, his whole soldier suit, in fact, enveloped in many papers and napkins, and locked away in one of her most sacred recesses; but it was with pride that she gave him up the key, and when he came out before her, all in full array, her soul was inly uplifted. Her son was a hero in her eyes.

"It 's all right, mother, I believe," said Hiel, surveying himself first over one shoulder and then the other, and consulting the looking-glass fringed with gilt knobs that hung in the widow's "keeping-room."

"Yes, indeed, Hiel, it 's all right. I 've kep' camphor gum with it to keep out the moths, and wrapped it up to save the gold, and I don't see that it 's a grain altered since it came home new. It 's just as new as ever 't was."

Hiel may be pardoned for smiling somewhat complacently on the image in the glass, — which certainly was that of a very comely youth, — and when he reflected that Nabby would to-morrow see him at the head of his company his heart swelled with a secret exultation. It is not alone the privilege of the fair sex to know when things are becoming to them, and Hiel knew when he looked well, as surely as if any one had told him. He gave himself a patronizing wink and whistled a strain of "Yankee Doodle" as he turned away from the glass, perhaps justly confiding in the immemorial power which military trappings have always exercised over the female heart. It was with reluctance that he laid aside the fascinating costume, and set himself to brightening up here and there a spot upon his sword-hilt or blade that called for an extra touch.

"We must have breakfast early to-morrow, mother; the boys will be here by sunrise."

"Never you fear," said the widow. "I 've got everything ready, and we 'll be all through by that time; but it 's as well to get to bed now."

And so in a few minutes more the candles were out and only the sound of the frogs and the whippoorwills broke the stillness of the cottage. Long before the nine o'clock bell rung Hiel and his mother were happy in the land of dreams. In the parsonage, too, there had been an effort of discipline to produce the needed stillness and early hours called for by to-morrow's exactions.

The boys, who had assisted at the dragging in of the cannon and heard its first reverberation, were in a most inflammatory state of patriotism, longing wildly for gunpowder. In those days no firecrackers or other vents of the kind had been provided for the relief of boys under pressure of excitement, and so they were forced to become explosive material themselves, and the walls of the parsonage rung with the sound. Dolly also was flying wildly around, asking Nabby questions about to-morrow, and running away before she got her answer, to listen to some new outburst from the boys.

Nabby, however, had her own very decisive ways of putting things, and settled matters at last by putting her to bed, saying as she did so, "Now, Dolly Cushing, you just shut up. You are crazier than a bobolink, and if you don't be still and go to sleep I won't touch to take you with me to see the trainers to-morrow. Your ma said you might go with me if you 'd be good; so you just shut up and go to sleep;" and Dolly shut her eyes hard and tried to obey.

We shall not say that there were not some corresponding movements before the glass on the part of Nabby before retiring. It certainly came into her head to try on her bonnet, which had been thriftily retrimmed and rearranged for summer use since the time of that sleigh-ride

with Hiel. Moreover, she chose out her gown and sorted a knot of ribbons to go with it. "I suppose," she said to herself, "all the girls will be making fools of themselves about Hiel Jones to-morrow, but I ain't a-going to." Nevertheless, she thought there was no harm in looking as well as she could.

CHAPTER XVIII

DOLLY'S "FOURTH"

BANG! went the cannon on the green, just as the first red streak appeared over Poganuc hills, and open flew Dolly's great blue eyes. Every boy in town was out of bed as if he had been fired out of a pop-gun, and into his clothes and out on the green with a celerity scarcely short of the miraculous. Dolly's little toilet took more time; but she, too, was soon out upon the scene with her curls in a wild, unbrushed tangle, her little breast swelling and beating with a great enthusiasm for General Washington and liberty and her country, all of which were somehow to be illustrated and honored that day in Poganuc. As the first rays of the rising sun struck the stars and stripes floating over the court house, and the sound of distant drum and fife announced the coming in of the Poganuc Rangers, Dolly was so excited that she burst into tears.

"What in the world are you crying for, Dolly?" said Bill, rather impatiently. "I don't see anything to cry about."

"I can't help it, Will," said Dolly, wiping her eyes; "it 's so glorious!"

"If that is n't just like a girl!" said Bill. Contempt could go no farther, and Dolly retreated abashed. She was a girl — there was no help for that; but for this one day she envied the boys — the happy boys who might some day grow up and fight for their country, and do something glorious like General Washington. Meanwhile, from mouth to mouth, every one was giving in advance an idea of what the splendors of the day were to be.

"I tell ye," said Abe Bowles, "this 'ere 's goin' to be a reel slam-bang, this 'ere is. Colonel Davenport is a-goin' to review the troops, and wear the very same uniform he wore at Long Island."

"Yes," said Liph Kingsley, "and old Cæsar 's goin' to wear his uniform and wait on the colonel. Tell ye what, the old snowball is on his high heels this morning — got a suit of the colonel's old uniform. Won't he strut and show his ivories!"

"Hulloa, boys, there 's going to be a sham fight; Hiel told me so," said Bob Cushing. "Some are going to be British and some Americans, and the Americans are going to whip the British and make 'em run."

"Tell ye what," said Jake Freeman, "there 'll be a bangin' and poppin'! won't there, boys!"

"Oh," said Dolly, who irrepressibly was following her brothers into the throng, "they won't *really* shoot anybody, will they?"

"Oh no, they 'll only fire powder, of course," said Bill majestically; "don't you know that?"

Dolly was rebuked and relieved at once.

"I say, boys," said Nabby, appearing suddenly among the throng, "your ma says you must come right home to breakfast this minit; and you, Dolly Cushing, what are you out here for, round among the fellers like a tomboy? Come right home."

"Why, Nabby, I wanted to see!" pleaded Dolly.

"Oh yes, you 're allers up to everything and into everything, and your hair not brushed nor nothin'. You 'll see it all in good time — come right away. Don't be a-lookin' at them trainers, now," she added, giving herself, however, a good observing glance to where across the green a knot of the Poganuc Rangers were collecting, and where Hiel, in full glory of his uniform, with his gold epaulets and cocked hat, was as busy and impressive as became the situation.

"Oh, Nabby, do look; there 's Hiel," cried Dolly.

"Yes, yes; I see plain enough there 's Hiel," said Nabby; "he thinks he 's mighty grand, I suppose. He 'll be conceiteder 'n ever, I expect."

Just at that moment, Hiel, recognizing Nabby, took off his gold-laced hat and bowed with a graceful flourish. Nabby returned a patronizing little nod, and either the morning dawn, or the recent heat of the kitchen fire, or *something*, flushed her cheeks. It was to be remarked in evidence of the presence of mind that distinguishes the female sex that, though she had been sent out on a hurried errand to call the children, yet she had on her best bonnet, and every curl of her hair had evidently been carefully and properly attended to that morning.

"Of course, I was n't going to look like a fright," she soliloquized. "Not that I care for any of 'em; but looks is looks any time o' day."

At the minister's breakfast-table the approaching solemnities were discussed. The procession was to form at the court house at nine o'clock. Democrats and Federalists had united to distribute impartially as possible the honors of the day. As Colonel Davenport, the only real live Revolutionary officer the county boasted, was an essential element of the show, and as he was a stanch Federalist, it was necessary to be conciliatory. Then there was the Federal ex-governor to sit on the platform with the newly elected Democratic governor. The services were in the meeting-house, as the largest building in town; and Dr. Cushing was appointed to make the opening prayer. As a compliment to the Episcopal church the Federal members of the committee allotted a closing prayer to the Rev. Simeon Coan. That young man, however, faithful to the logic of his creed, politely declined joining in public services where his assisting might be held to recognize the ordination of an unauthorized sectarian preacher; and so

the Rev. Dr. Goodman, of Skantic, was appointed in his place. Squire Lewis was observed slightly to elevate his eyebrows and shrug his shoulders as he communicated to the committee the grounds of his rector's refusal. He was, in fact, annoyed, and a little embarrassed, by the dry, amused expression of Sheriff Dennie's countenance.

"Oh, speak it all out; never fear, Lewis," he said. "I like to see a man face the music. Your minister is a logical fellow, and keeps straight up to what he teaches. You old Episcopalians were getting loose in your ideas; you needed cording up."

"There 's such a thing as cording too tight and breaking a string sometimes," muttered the squire, who was not well pleased at the scruple that kept his church unrepresented in the exercise.

The domestic arrangements for the parson's family were announced at the breakfast-table. The boys were endowed with the magnificent sum of six cents each and turned loose for the day, with the parting admonition to keep clear of powder — a most hopeless and unnecessary charge, since powder was the very heart and essence of all the glory of the day.

At an early hour the bell of the meeting-house rung out over all the neighboring hills and valleys; the summons was replied to by streams of wagons on the roads leading to Poganuc for a square of ten miles round. Not merely Poganuc — North, South, East, West, and Centre — was in motion, but several adjacent towns and villages sent forth their trainers — bands of militia, who rose about midnight and marched till morning to be on time.

By nine o'clock nominally (but far nearer to ten really) the procession started from the court house with drum and fife and banners. Dolly had been committed for the day to the charge of Nabby, who should see that she took no harm, and engineer for her the best chances of seeing all

that went on; while Mrs. Cushing, relieved of this care, took her seat quietly among the matronage of Poganuc and waited for the entrance of the procession. But Dolly saw them start from the court house, with beat of drum and peal of fife; and Dolly saw the banners, and saw Colonel Davenport with his white hair and splendid physique, now more splendid in the blue and gold of his military dress; and they all marched with majestic tread towards the meeting-house. Then Nabby hurried with her charge and got for her a seat by herself in the front singers' seat in the gallery, where she could see them all file in and take their seats on the platform. Nabby had been one of the flowers of this singers' seat before her father's change of base had transferred her to the Episcopal church, and her presence to-day was welcomed by many old friends — for Nabby had a good, strong, clear voice of her own, and was no small addition to the choral force.

The services opened by the national Puritan psalm: —

"Let children hear the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old,
Which in our younger years we saw
And which our fathers told.

"Our lips shall teach them to our sons,
And they again to theirs,
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs.

"That they may learn, in God alone
Their hope securely stands;
That they may ne'er his laws forget,
But practice his commands."

The wild warble of "St. Martin's," the appointed tune whose wings bore these words, swelled and billowed and reverberated through the house, carrying with it that indefinable thrill which always fills a house when deep emotions are touched — deepest among people habitually reserved and reticent of outward demonstration. It was

this solemn undertone, this mysterious, throbbing sub-bass of repressed emotion, which gave the power and effect to the Puritan music. After the singing came Dr. Cushing's prayer — which was a recounting of God's mercies to New England from the beginning, and of his deliverances from her enemies, and of petitions for the glorious future of the United States of America — that they might be chosen vessels, commissioned to bear the light of liberty and religion through all the earth and to bring in the great millennial day, when wars should cease and the whole world, released from the thralldom of evil, should rejoice in the light of the Lord.

The millennium was ever the star of hope in the eyes of the New England clergy; their faces were set eastward, towards the dawn of that day, and the cheerfulness of those anticipations illuminated the hard tenets of their theology with a rosy glow. They were children of the morning. The doctor, however, did not fail to make use of his privilege to give some very decided political hits, and some petitions arose which caused sensation between the different parties. The New England clergyman on these occasions had his political antagonists at decided advantage. If he could not speak at them he could pray at them, and of course there was no reply to an impeachment in the court of heaven. So when the doctor's prayer was over, glances were interchanged, showing the satisfaction or dissatisfaction, as might be, of the listeners.

And now rose Colonel Davenport to read the Declaration of Independence. Standing square and erect, his head thrown back, he read in a resonant and emphatic voice that great enunciation upon which American national existence was founded. Dolly had never heard it before, and even now had but a vague idea of what was meant by some parts of it; but she gathered enough from the recital of the abuses and injuries which had driven her nation to

this course to feel herself swelling with indignation, and ready with all her little mind and strength to applaud that concluding Declaration of Independence which the colonel rendered with resounding majesty. She was as ready as any of them to pledge her "life, fortune, and sacred honor" for such a cause. The heroic element was strong in Dolly; it had come down by "ordinary generation" from a line of Puritan ancestry, and just now it swelled her little frame and brightened her cheeks and made her long to do something, she scarce knew what; to fight for her country or to make some declaration on her own account.

But now came the oration of the day, pronounced by a lively young Virginia law student in the office of Judge Gridley. It was as ornate and flowery, as full of patriotism and promise, as has been the always approved style of such productions. The bird of our nation received the usual appropriate flourishes, flew upward and sunward, waved his pinions, gazed with undaunted eye on the brightness, and did all other things appointed for the American Eagle to do on the Fourth of July. It was a nicely written classical composition, and eminently satisfactory to the audience; and Dolly, without any very direct conception of its exact meaning, was delighted with it, and so were all the Poganuc people.

Then came the singing of an elaborate anthem, on which the choir had been practicing for a month beforehand, and in which the various parts ran, and skipped, and hopped, and chased each other round and round, and performed all sorts of unheard-of trills and quavers and musical evolutions, with a heartiness of self-satisfaction that was charming to witness.

Then, when all was over, the procession marched out — the magnates on the stage to a dinner, and the Poganuc military to refresh themselves at Glazier's, preparatory to the grand review in the afternoon. Dolly spent her six

cents for gingerbread, and walked unwearyingly the rounds of sight-seeing with Nabby, her soul inly uplifted with the grandeur of the occasion.

In the afternoon came the military display; and Colonel Davenport on his white horse reviewed the troops; and just behind him, also mounted, was old Cato, with his gold-laced hat and plume, his buff breeches and long-tailed blue coat. On the whole, this solemn black attendant formed a striking and picturesque addition to the scene. And so there were marching and countermarching and military evolutions of all kinds, and Hiel, with his Poganuc Rangers, figured conspicuously in the eyes of all. It was a dangerous sight for Nabby. She really could not help feeling a secret awe for Hiel, as if he had been wafted away from her into some higher sphere; he looked so very determined and martial that she began to admit that he might carry any fortress that he set himself seriously to attack. After the regular review came the sham fight, which was, in fact, but an organized military frolic. Some of the West Poganuc youth had dressed themselves as Indians, and other companies, drawn by lot, were to personate the British, and there was skirmishing and fighting and running, to the wild and crazy delight of the boys. A fort, which had been previously constructed of bushes and trees, was furiously attacked by British and Indians, and set on fire; and then the Americans bursting out scattered both the fire and the forces, and performed prodigies of valor. In short, it was a day of days to Dolly and the children, and when sober twilight drew on they came home intoxicated with patriotism and sight-seeing.

On her way home Dolly was spied out by her old friend Judge Gridley, who always delighted to have a gossip with her.

"Ha, my little Dolly, are you out to-day?"

"To be sure, sir," said Dolly; "indeed I 'm out. Oh,

has n't it been glorious! I 've never been so happy in my life. I never heard the Declaration of Independence before."

"Well, and what do you think of it?" asked the judge.

"I never heard anything like it," said Dolly. "I did n't know before how they did abuse us, and was n't it grand that we would n't bear it! I never heard anything so splendid as that last part."

"You would have made a good soldier."

"If I were a man I would. Only think of it, Colonel Davenport fought in the war! I 'm so glad we can see one man that did. If we had lived then, I know my papa and all my brothers would have fought; we would have had 'liberty or death.'"

Dolly pronounced these words, which she had heard in the oration, with a quivering eagerness. The old judge gave her cheek a friendly pinch.

"You 'll do," he said; "but now you must let Nabby here get you home and quiet you down, or you won't sleep all night. Good-by, Pussy."

And so went off Dolly's Fourth of July. But Hiel made an evening call at the parsonage in his full regimentals, and stayed to a late hour unreproved. There were occasions when even the nine o'clock bell did not send a young fellow home. This appeared to be one of them.

CHAPTER XIX

SUMMER DAYS IN POGANUC

So passed Dolly's Fourth of July, — a confused dream of glory and patriotism, of wonderful sights and surprises; but, like a dream, it all melted away. New England life was too practical and laborious to give more than one day to holiday performances, and with the night of the Fourth the whole pageant vanished. Hiel's uniform, with its gold lace and feathers, returned to the obscurity of Mother Jones's pillow-cases and camphor gum, and was locked away in secret places; and Hiel was only a simple stage-driver, going forth on his route as aforetime. So with the trappings of the Poganuc Rangers — who the day before had glittered like so many kinghts-errant in the front of battle — all were laid by in silent waiting, and the Poganuc Rangers rose at four o'clock and put on their working-clothes and cowhide shoes, and were abroad with their oxen. The shoemaker and the carpenter, who yesterday were transfigured in blue and gold, to-day were hammering shoe-soles and planing boards as if no such thing had happened. In the shadows of the night the cannon had vanished from the village green and gone where it came from; the flag on the court house was furled, and the world of Poganuc Centre was again the same busy, literal work-a-day world as ever. Only Liph Kingsley, who had burned his hand with gunpowder in consequence of carrying too much New England rum in his head, and one or two boys, who had met with a sprain or bruise in the excitement of the day, retained any lasting memorials of the celebration.

It is difficult in this our era of railroads and steam to give any idea of the depths of absolute stillness and repose that brooded in the summer skies over the wooded hills of Poganuc. No daily paper told the news of distant cities. Summer traveling was done in stages, and was long and wearisome, and therefore there was little of that. Everybody stayed at home, and expected to stay there the year through. A journey from Poganuc to Boston or New York was more of an undertaking in those days than a journey to Europe is in ours. Now and then some of the great square houses on the street of Poganuc Centre received a summer visitor, and then everybody in town knew it and knew all about it. The visitor's family, rank, position in life, probable amount of property, and genealogy to remote ancestors were freely discussed and settled, till all Poganuc was fully informed. The elect circle of Poganuc called on them, and made stately tea-parties in their honor, and these entertainments pleasantly rippled the placid surface of society. But life went on there with a sort of dreamy stillness. The different summer flowers came out in their successive ranks in the neatly kept garden; roses followed peonies, and white lilies came and went, and crimson and white phloxes stood ranged in midsummer ranks, and the yellow tribes of marigolds brought up the autumnal season. And over on the woody hills around the town the spring tints deepened and grew dark in summer richness, and then began breaking here and there into streaks and flecks of gold and crimson, foretelling autumn. And there were wonderful golden sunsets, and moonlight nights when the street of Poganuc seemed overshot with a silver network of tracery like the arches of some cathedral. The doors and windows of the houses stood innocently open all night for the moon to shine in, and youths and maidens walked and wandered and sentimentalized up and down the long, dewy street, and nobody

seemed to know how fast the short, beautiful summer of those regions was passing away.

As to Dolly, summer was her time of life and joy; but it was not by any means a joy unmixed.

Dolly's education was conducted on the good old-fashioned principle that every one must do his little part in the battle of life, and that nobody was pretty enough or good enough to be kept merely for ornamental purposes. She was no curled darling, to be kept on exhibition in white dresses and broad sashes, and she had been sedulously instructed in the orthodoxy of Dr. Watts, that

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do."

It was the duty of the good housemother of those days to be so much in advance of this unpleasant personage that there should be no room for his temptations. Accordingly, any of the numerous household tasks of the parsonage that could be trusted to a little pair of hands were turned over to Dolly. In those days were none of the thousand conveniences which now abridge the labors of the housekeeper. Everything came in the rough, and had to be reduced to a usable form in the household. The delicate, smooth white salt which filled the cellars at the table was prepared by Dolly's manipulation from coarse rock-salt crystals, which she was taught to wash and dry, and pound and sift, till it became of snowy fineness; and quite a long process it was. Then there were spices to be ground, and there was coffee to be browned to the exact and beautiful shade dear to household ideality; and Dolly could do that. Being a bright, enterprising little body, she did not so much object to these processes, which rather interested her, but her very soul was wearied within her at the drill of the long and varied sewing lessons that were deemed indispensable to her complete education. Pounding salt, or grinding spice, or beating eggs, or roast-

ing coffee, was endurable; but darning stockings and stitching wristbands and "scratching" gathers, were a weariness unto her spirit. And yet it was only at the price of penances like these, well and truly performed, that Dolly's golden *own* hours of leisure were given.

Most of her household tasks could be performed in the early morning hours before school, and after school Dolly measured the height of the afternoon sun with an avaricious eye. Would there be time enough to explore the woody hills beyond Poganuc River before sundown? and would they let her go? For oh, those woods! What a world of fairy-land, what a world of pure, untold joy was there to Dolly! When she found her face fairly set towards them, with leave to stay till sundown, and with Spring at her heels, Dolly was as blissful, as perfectly happy, as a child can ever be made by any one thing.

The sense of perfect freedom, the wonder, the curiosity, the vague expectation of what she might find or see, made her heart beat with pleasure. First came the race down through the tall, swaying meadow-grass and white-hatted daisies to the Poganuc River — a brown, clear, gurgling stream, wide, shallow, and garrulous, that might be easily crossed on mossy stepping-stones. Here was a world of delight to Dolly. Skipping from stone to stone, or reclining athwart some great rock around which the brown waters rippled, she watched the little fishes come and go, darting hither and thither like flecks of silver. Down under the shade of dark hemlocks the river had worn a deep pool where the translucent water lay dark and still; and Dolly, climbing carefully and quietly to the rocky side, could lean over and watch the slim, straight pickerel, holding themselves so still in the water that the play of their gossamer fins made no ripple, — so still, so apparently unwatchful and drowsy, that Dolly again and again fancied she might slyly reach down her little hand and take one

out of the water; but the moment the rosy finger-tips touched the wave, with a flash, like a ray of light, the coveted prize was gone. There was no catching a pickerel asleep, however quiet he might appear. Yet, time after time, Dolly tried the experiment, burning with the desire to win glory among the boys by bringing home an actual and veritable pickerel of her own catching.

But there were other beauties, dryad treasures, more accessible. The woods along the moist margin of the river were full of the pink and white azalea, and she gathered besides the fragrant blossoms stores of what were called "honeysuckle apples" that grew upon them — fleshy exudations not particularly nice in flavor, but crisp, cool, and much valued among children. There, too, were crimson wintergreen berries, spicy in their sweetness, and the young, tender leaves of the wintergreen, ranking high as an eatable dainty among little folk. Dolly's basket was sure to fill rapidly when she set herself to gathering these treasures, and the sun would be almost down before she could leave the enchanted shades of the wood and come back to real life again. But Saturday afternoon was a sort of child's paradise. No school was kept, and even household disciplinarians recognized a reasonably well-behaved child's right to a Saturday afternoon play-spell.

"Now, Dolly," had Nabby said to her the week before, "you be sure and be a good girl, and do up all your stitching and get the stockings mended afore Saturday comes, and then we 'll take Saturday afternoon to go a-huckleberrying up to Pequannock Rock; and we 'll stop and see Mis' Persis."

This, let it be known, was a programme to awaken Dolly's ambition. Pequannock Rock was a distance which she never would be permitted to explore alone, and Mis' Persis was to her imagination a most interesting and stimulating personage. She was a widow, and the story ran

that her deceased husband had been an Indian — a story which caused Dolly to regard her with a sort of awe, connecting her with Cotton Mather's stories of war-whoops and scalping-knives and midnight horrors when houses were burned and children carried off to Canada.

Nevertheless, Mis' Persis was an inoffensive and quite useful member of society. She had her little house and garden, which she cultivated with energy and skill. She kept her cow, her pig, her chickens, and contrived always to have something to sell when she needed an extra bit of coin. She was versed in all the Indian lore of roots and herbs, and her preparations of these for medicinal purposes were much in request. Among the farming population around, Mis' Persis was held in respect as a medical authority, and her opinions were quoted with confidence. She was also of considerable repute among the best families of Poganuc as a filler of gaps such as may often occur in household economy. There was nothing wanted to be done that Mis' Persis could not do. She could wash, or iron, or bake, or brew, or nurse the sick, as the case might require. She was, in fact, one of the reserved forces of Poganuc society. She was a member of Dr. Cushing's church, in good and regular standing, and, in her way, quite devoted to her minister and church, and always specially affable and gracious to Dolly.

This particular Saturday afternoon all the constellations were favorable. Dolly was pronounced a good girl, her week's tasks well performed; and never were dinner-dishes more rapidly whirled into place than were Nabby's on that same afternoon; so that before three o'clock the pair were well on their way to the huckleberry field. There, under the burning August sun, the ground shot up those ardent flower-flames well called fire-lilies, and the wild roses showered their deep pink petals as they pushed through the thickets, and the huckleberry bushes bent low under the

weight of the great sweet berries; and Dolly's cheeks were all aflame, like the fire-lilies themselves, with heat and enthusiasm as she gathered the purple harvest into her basket. When the baskets were filled and Dolly had gathered fire-lilies and wild roses more than she knew how to carry, it was proposed to stop a little and rest, on the homeward route, at Mis' Persis' cottage.

They found her sitting on her doorstep, knitting. A little wiry, swart, thin woman was she, alert in her movements, and quick and decided of speech. Her black eyes had in them a latent fiery gleam that suggested all the while that though pleased and pleasant at the present moment Mis' Persis might be dangerous if roused, and Dolly was always especially conciliatory and polite in her addresses to her. On the present occasion Mis' Persis was delightfully. hospitable. She installed Dolly in a small splint-bottomed rocking-chair at the door, and treated her to a cup of milk and a crisp cooky.

"Why, what a little girl you are to be so far from home!" she said.

"Oh, I don't mind," said Dolly; "I am never tired. I could pick berries all day."

"But, sakes alive! ain't you afraid of snakes?" said Mis' Persis. "Why, my sister got dreadfully bit by a rattlesnake when she wa'n't much older 'n you," and Mis' Persis shook her head weirdly.

"Oh, dear me! Did it kill her?" said Dolly in horror.

"No; she lived many a year after," said Mis' Persis, with a reticent air, as one who could say more if properly approached.

"Do, do tell us all about it; do, Mis' Persis. I never saw a rattlesnake. I never heard one. I should n't know what it was if I saw one."

"You would n't ever forget it if you did," said Mis' Persis oracularly.

"Oh, please, Mis' Persis, do tell about it," said Dolly eagerly. "Where were you, and how did it happen?"

"Well," said Mis' Persis, "it was when I was a girl and lived over in Danbury. There 's where I come from. My sister Polly and me, we went out to High Ledge one afternoon after huckleberries; and as we was makin' our way through some low bushes we heard the sharpest noise, jest like a locust screechin', right under foot, and jest then Polly she screams out, 'Oh, Sally,' says she, 'somethin' 's bit me!' and I looked down and saw a great rattlesnake crawlin' off through the bushes — a great big fellow, as big as my wrist.

"'Well,' says I, 'Polly, I must get you home quick as I can;' and we set down our pails and started for home. It was a broilin' hot day, and we hed a'most a mile to walk, and afore we got home I hed to carry her. Her tongue was swelled so that it hung out of her mouth; her neck and throat was all swelled, and spotted like the snake. Oh, it was dreadful! We got her into the house, and on the bed, and sent for the Indian doctor — there ain't nobody knows about them snake-bites but Indians. Well, he come and brought a bag of rattlesnake-weed with him, and he made poultices of it and laid all over her stomach and breast and hands and feet, and he made a tea of it and got some down her throat, and kep' a-feedin' on it to her till she got so she could swallow. That 's the way she got well."

"Oh, Mis' Persis," said Dolly, after a pause of awe and horror, "what is rattlesnake-weed?"

"Why, it 's a worse poison than the snake-bite, and it kills the snake-poison 'cause it 's stronger. Wherever the snakes grow, there the rattlesnake-weed grows. The snakes know it themselves, and when they fight and bite each other they go and eat the weed and it cures 'em. Here 's some of it," she said, going to the wall of the room,

which was all hung round with dried bunches of various herbs — "here 's some I got over on Poganuc Mountain, if you ever should want any."

"Oh, I hope I never shall," said Dolly. "Nabby, only think! What if there had been a snake in those bushes!"

"Well, you can always know," said Mis' Persis, "if you hear somethin' in the bushes jest like a locust, sharp and sudden — why, you 'd better look afore you set your foot down. But we don't hev no rattlesnakes round this way. I 've beat all these lots through and never seen tail of one. This 'ere ain't one o' their places; over to Poganuc Mountain, now, a body has to take care how they step."

"Do you suppose, Mis' Persis," said Dolly, after a few moments of grave thought, — "do you suppose God made that weed grow on purpose to cure rattlesnake-bites?"

"Of course he did," said Mis' Persis, as decidedly as if she had been a trained theologian, "that 's what rattlesnake-weed was made fer; any fool can see that."

"It seems to me," said Dolly, "that it would have been better not to have the snakes, and then people would n't be bit at all — would n't it?"

"Oh, we don't know everything," said Mis' Persis; "come to that, there 's a good many things that nobody knows what they 's made fer. But the Indians used to say there was some cure grew for every sickness if only our eyes was opened to see it, and I expect it 's so."

"Come, Dolly," said Nabby, "the sun is gettin' pretty low; I must hurry home to get supper."

Just then the bell of the distant meeting-house gave three tolling strokes, whereat all the three stopped talking and listened intently.

Of all the old Puritan customs none was more thrillingly impressive than this solemn announcement of a death, and this deliberate tolling out of the years of a finished life.

It was a sound to which every one, whether alone or in company, at work or in play, stopped to listen, and listened with a nervous thrill of sympathy.

"I wonder who that is?" said Nabby.

"Perhaps it 's Lyddy Bascom," said Mis' Persis; "she 's been down with typhus fever."

The bell now was rapidly tolling one, two, three, four, and all the company counted eagerly up to sixteen, seventeen, when Mis' Persis interposed.

"No, 't ain't Lyddy; it 's goin' on," and they counted and counted, and still the bell kept tolling till it had numbered eighty. "It 's old Granny Moss," said Mis' Persis decisively; "she 's ben lyin' low some time. Well, she 's in heaven now, the better for her."

"Ah, I 'm glad she 's in heaven," said Dolly, with a shivering sigh; "she 's all safe now."

"Oh yes, she 's better off," said Nabby, getting up and shaking her dress as if to shake off the very thought of death. A warm, strong, glowing creature she was, as full of earth-life as the fire-lilies they had been gathering. She seemed a creature made for this world and its present uses, and felt an animal repulsion to the very thought of death.

"Come, Dolly," she said briskly, as she counted the last toll, "we can't wait another minute."

"Well, Dolly," said Mis' Persis, "tell your mother I 'm a-comin' this year to make up her candles for her, and the work sha'n't cost her a cent. I 've been tryin' out a lot o' bayberry wax to put in 'em and make 'em good and firm."

"I 'm sure you are very good," said Dolly, with instinctive politeness.

"I want to do my part towards supportin' my minister," said Mis' Persis, "and that 's what I hev to give."

"I 'll tell my mother, and I know she 'll thank you," answered Dolly, as they turned homeward.

The sun was falling lower and lower toward the west. The long shadows of the two danced before them on the dusty road.

After walking half a mile they came to a stone culvert, where a little brawling stream crossed the road. The edges of the brook were fringed with sweet-flag blades waving in the afternoon light, and the water gurgled and tinkled pleasantly among the stones.

"There, Dolly," said Nabby, seating herself on a flat stone by the book, "I 'm goin' to rest a minute, and you can find some of them sweet-flag 'graters' if you want." This was the blossom-bud of the sweet-flag, which when young and tender was reckoned a delicacy among omnivorous children.

"Why, Nabby, I thought you were in such a hurry to get home," said Dolly, gathering the blades of sweet-flag and looking for the "graters."

"No need of hurry," said Nabby; "the sun 's an hour and a half high," and she leaned over the curb of the bridge and looked at herself in the brook. She took off her sunbonnet and fanned herself with it. Then she put a bright spotted fire-lily in her hair and watched the effect in the water. It certainly was a brilliant picture, framed by the brown stones and green rushes of the brook.

"Oh, Nabby," cried Dolly, "look! There 's the stage and Hiel coming down the hill!"

"Sure e-nough!" said Nabby in a tone of proper surprise, as if she had expected anything else to happen on that road at that time of the afternoon. "As true as I live and breathe it *is* Hiel and the stage," she added, "and not a creature in it. Now, we 'll get a ride home."

Nabby's sunbonnet hung on her arm; her hair fell in a tangle of curls around her flushed cheeks as she stood waiting for Hiel to come up. Altogether she was a picture. That young man took in the points of the view at

once and vowed in his heart that Nabby was the handsomest girl upon his beat.

"Waitin' for me to come along?" he said as he drew up.

"Well, you 're sort o' handy now and then," said Nabby. "We 've been huckleberrying all the afternoon, and are tired."

Hiel got down and opened the stage-door and helped the two to get in with their berries and flowers.

"You owe me *one* for this," said Hiel when he handed in Nabby's things.

"Well, there 's one," said Nabby, laughing and striking him across the eyes with her bunch of lilies.

"Never mind, miss. I shall keep the account," said Hiel; and he gathered up the reins, resumed his high seat, made his grand entrance into Poganuc, and drew up at the parson's door. For a week thereafter it was anxiously discussed in various circles how Nabby and Dolly came to be in that stage. Where had they been? How did it happen? The obscurity of the event kept Hiel on the brain of several damsels who had nothing better to talk about. And the day closed with a royal supper of huckleberries and milk. So went a specimen number of Dolly's Saturday afternoons.

CHAPTER XX

GOING "A-CHESTNUTTING"

THE bright days of summer were a short-lived joy at Poganuc. One hardly had time to say "How beautiful!" before it was past. By September came the frosty nights that turned the hills into rainbow colors and ushered in Autumn with her gorgeous robes of golden-rod and purple asters. There was still the best of sport for the children, however; for the frost ripened the shagbark walnuts and opened the chestnut-burs, and the glossy brown chestnuts dropped down among the rustling yellow leaves and the beds of fringed blue gentians.

One peculiarity of the Puritan New England régime is worthy of special notice, and that is the generosity and liberality of its dealing in respect to the spontaneous growths of the soil. The chestnuts, the hickory-nuts, the butternuts — no matter upon whose land they grew — were free to whoever would gather them. The girls and boys roamed at pleasure through the woods and picked, unmolested, wherever they could find the most abundant harvest. In like manner the wild fruits — grapes, strawberries, huckleberries, and cranberries — were for many years free to the earliest comer. This is the more to be remarked in a community where life was peculiarly characterized by minute economy, where everything had its carefully ascertained money value. Every board, nail, brad, every drop of paint, every shingle, in house or barn, was counted and estimated. In making bargains and conducting domestic economies, there was the minutest considera-

tion of the money value of time, labor, and provision. And yet their rigidly parsimonious habit of life presented this one remarkable exception, of certain quite valuable spontaneous growths left unguarded and unappropriated.

Our fathers came to New England from a country where the poor man was everywhere shut out from the bounties of nature by game-laws and severe restrictions. Though his children might be dying of hunger he could not catch a fish, or shoot a bird, or snare the wild game of the forest, without liability to arrest as a criminal; he could not gather the wild fruits of the earth without danger of being held a trespasser, and risking fine and imprisonment. When the fathers took possession of the New England forest it was in the merciful spirit of the Mosaic law, which commanded that something should always be left to be gathered by the poor. From the beginning of the New England life till now there have been poor people, widows and fatherless children, who have eked out their scanty living by the sale of the fruits and nuts which the custom of the country allowed them freely to gather on other people's land. Within the past fifty years, while this country has been filling up with foreigners of a different day and training, these old customs have been passing away. Various fruits and nuts, once held free, are now appropriated by the holders of the soil and made subject to restriction and cultivation.

In the day we speak of, however, all the forest hills around Poganuc were a free nut-orchard, and one of the chief festive occasions of the year, in the family at the parsonage, was the autumn gathering of nuts, when Dr. Cushing took the matter in hand and gave his mind to it. On the present occasion, having just finished four sermons which completely cleared up and reconciled all the difficulties between the doctrines of free agency and the divine decrees, the doctor was naturally in good spirits. He

declared to his wife, "There! my dear, *that* subject is disposed of. I never before succeeded in really clearing it up; but now the matter is done for all time." Having thus wound up the sun and moon, and arranged the courses of the stars in celestial regions, the doctor was as alert and light hearted as any boy, in his preparations for the day's enterprise.

"Boys," he said, "we 'll drive over to Poganuc Ledge; up there are those big chestnuts that grow right out of the rock; there 's no likelihood of anybody's getting them — but I noticed the other day they were hanging full."

"Oh, father, those trees are awful to climb."

"Of course they are. I won't let you boys try to climb them — mind that; but I 'll go up myself and shake them, and you pick up underneath."

No Highland follower ever gloried more in the physical prowess of his chief than the boys in that of their father. Was there a tree he could not climb — a chestnut, or walnut, or butternut, however exalted in fastnesses of the rock, that he could not shake down? They were certain there was not. The boys rushed hither and thither, with Spring barking at their heels, leaving open doors and shouting orders to each other concerning the various pails and baskets necessary to contain their future harvest. Mrs. Cushing became alarmed for the stability of her household arrangements.

"Now, father, *please* don't take all my baskets this time," pleaded she, "just let me arrange" —

"Well, my dear, have it all your own way; only be sure to provide things enough."

"Well, surely, they can all pick in pails or cups, and then they can be emptied into a bag," said Mrs. Cushing. "You won't get more than a bushel, certainly."

"Oh yes, we shall — three or four bushels," said Will triumphantly.

"There 's no end of what we shall get when father goes," said Bob. "Why, you 've no idea how he rattles 'em down."

Meanwhile Mrs. Cushing and Nabby were packing a hamper with bread and butter, and tea-rusks, and unlimited gingerbread, and doughnuts crisp and brown, and savory ham, and a bottle of cream, and coffee all ready for boiling in the pot, and teacups and spoons — everything, in short, ready for a gypsy encampment, while the parson's horse stood meekly absorbing an extra ration of oats in that contemplative attitude which becomes habitual to good family horses, especially of the ministerial profession. Mrs. Cushing and the doctor, with Nabby and Dolly, and the hamper and baskets, formed the load of the light wagon, while Will and Bob were both mounted upon "the colt" — a scrawny ewe-necked beast, who had long outgrown this youthful designation. The boys, however, had means best known to themselves of rousing his energies and keeping him ahead of the wagon in a convulsive canter, greatly to the amusement of Nabby and Dolly.

Our readers would be happy could they follow the party along the hard, stony roads, up the winding mountain-paths, where the trees, flushing in purple, crimson, and gold, seemed to shed light on their paths; where beds of fringed gentian seemed, as the sunlight struck them, to glow like so many sapphires, and every leaf of every plant seemed to be passing from the green of summer into some quaint new tint of autumnal splendor. Here and there groups of pines or tall hemlocks, with their heavy background of solemn green, threw out the flamboyant tracery of the forest in startling distinctness. Here and there, as they passed a bit of low land, the swamp maples seemed really to burn like crimson flames; and the clumps of black alder, with their vivid scarlet berries, exalted the effect of color to the very highest and most daring result. No

artist ever has ventured to put on canvas the exact copy of the picture that nature paints for us every year in the autumn months. There are things the Almighty Artist can do that no earthly imitator can more than hopelessly admire.

As to Dolly, she was like a bird held in a leash, full of exclamations and longings, now to pick "those leaves," and then to gather "those gentians," or to get "those lovely red berries," but was forced to resign herself to be carried by.

"They would all fade before the day is through," said her mother; "wait till we come home at night, and then, if you 're not too tired, you may gather them." Dolly sighed and resigned herself to wait.

We shall not tell the joys of the day; how the doctor climbed the trees victoriously, how the brown, glossy chestnuts flew down in showers as he shook the limbs, and how fast they were gathered by busy fingers below. Not merely chestnuts, but walnuts, and a splendid butternut-tree, that grew in the high cleft of a rocky ledge, all were made to yield up their treasures till the bags were swelled to a most auspicious size. Then came the nooning, when the boys delighted in making a roaring hot fire, and the coffee was put on to boil, and Nabby spread the table-cloth and unpacked the hamper on a broad, flat rock around which a white foam of moss formed a soft, elastic seat. The doctor was most entertaining, and related stories of the fishing and hunting excursions of his youth, of the trout he had caught and the ducks he had shot. The boys listened with ears of emulation, and Dolly sighed to think she never was to be a man and do all these fine things that her brothers were going to do.

But in the midst of all came Abel Moss, a hard-visaged farmer from one of the upland farms, who, seeing the minister's wagon go by, had come to express his mind to

him concerning a portion of his last Sunday's sermon; and the doctor, who but a moment before had thought only of trout and wild ducks, sat down by the side of Abel on a fragment of rock and began explaining to him the difference between the laws of matter and the laws of mind in moral government, and the difference between divine sovereignty as applied to matter and to mind. The children wandered off during the discussion, which lasted some time; but when the western sunbeams, sloping through the tree-trunks, warned them that it was time to return, the doctor's wagon might have been seen coming down the rough slope of the mountain.

"There, my dear, I 've set Moss right," he said. "There was a block in his wheels that I 've taken out. I think he 'll go all straight now. Moss has a good head; when he once sees a thing, he does see it, — and I think I 've clinched the nail with him to-day."

CHAPTER XXI

DOLLY'S SECOND CHRISTMAS

ONCE more had Christmas come round in Poganuc; once more the Episcopal church was being dressed with ground pine and spruce; but this year economy had begun to make its claims felt. An illumination might do very well to open a church, but there were many who said "to what purpose is this waste?" when the proposition was made to renew it yearly. Consequently it was resolved to hold the Christmas Eve service with only that necessary amount of light which would enable the worshipers to read the prayers.

The lines in Poganuc were now drawn. The crowd who flock after a new thing had seen the new thing, and the edge of curiosity was somewhat dulled. Both ministers had delivered their Christmas sermons, to the satisfaction of themselves and their respective flocks, and both congregations had taken the direction of their practical course accordingly. On this Christmas Eve, therefore, Dolly was not racked and torn with any violent temptation to go over to the church, but went to bed at her usual hour with a resigned and quiet spirit. She felt herself a year older, and more than a year wiser, than when Christmas had first dawned upon her consciousness. We have seen that the little maiden was a most intense and sympathetic partisan, and during the political discussions of the past year she had imbibed the idea that the Episcopal party were opposed to her father. Nay, she had heard with burning indignation that Mr. Simeon Coan had said

that her father was not a regularly ordained minister, and therefore had no right to preach or administer ordinances. Dolly had no idea of patronizing by her presence people who expressed such opinions. Whoever and whatever in the world might be in error, Dolly was sure her father never could be in the wrong, and went to sleep placidly in that belief.

It was not altogether pleasant to Mrs. Cushing to receive a message from Mis' Persis that she would come and make up her candles for her on the 25th of December. In a figurative and symbolical point of view, the devoting that day to the creation of the year's stock of light might have seemed eminently appropriate. But the making of so many candles involved an amount of disagreeable particulars hard to conceive in our days, when gas and kerosene make the lighting of houses one of the least of cares. In the times we speak of, candle-making for a large household was a serious undertaking; and the day devoted to it was one that any child would remember as an unlucky one for childish purposes of enjoyment, sevenfold worse in its way even than washing-day. Mrs. Cushing still retained enough of the habits of her early education to have preferred a quiet day for her Christmas. She would willingly have spent it in letter-writing, reading, and meditation; but when Mis' Persis *gave* her time and labor it seemed only fair to allow her to choose her own day.

So, upon this Christmas morning, Mis' Persis appeared on the ground by day-dawn. A great kettle was slung over the kitchen fire, in which cakes of tallow were speedily liquefying; a frame was placed quite across the kitchen to sustain candle-rods, with a train of boards underneath to catch the drippings, and Mis' Persis, with a brow like one of the Fates, announced, "Now we can't hev any young uns in this kitchen to-day;" and Dolly saw that there was no getting any attention in that quarter. Mis'

Persis, in a gracious Saturday afternoon mood, sitting in her own tent door dispensing hospitalities and cookies, was one thing; but Mis' Persis in her armor, with her loins girded and a hard day's work to be conquered, was quite another: she was terrible as Minerva with her helmet on.

Dinner-baskets for all the children were hastily packed, and they were sent off to school with the injunction on no account to show their faces about the premises till night. The doctor, warned of what was going on, retreated to his study at the top of the house, where, serenely above the lower cares of earth, he sailed off into President Edwards's treatise on the nature of true virtue, concerning which he was preparing a paper to read at the next Association meeting. That candles were a necessity of life he was well convinced, and by faith he dimly accepted the fact that one day in the year the whole house was to be devoted and given up to this manufacture; and his part of the business, as he understood it, was, clearly, to keep himself out of the way till it was over.

"There won't be much of a dinner at home, anyway," said Nabby to Dolly, as she packed her basket with an extra doughnut or two. "I 've got to go to church to-day, 'cause I 'm one of the singers, and your ma 'll be busy waitin' on her; so we shall just have a pick-up dinner, and you be sure not to come home till night; by that time it 'll be all over."

Dolly trotted off to school well content with the prospect before her; a nooning, with leave to play with the girls at school, was not an unpleasant idea. But the first thing that saluted her on her arrival was that Bessie Lewis — her own dear, particular Bessie — was going to have a Christmas party at her house that afternoon, and was around distributing invitations right and left among the scholars with a generous freedom.

"We are going to have nuts and raisins and cake and

mottoes," said Bessie, with artless triumph. The news of this bill of fare spread like wildfire through the school.

Never had a party been heard of which contemplated such a liberal entertainment, for the rising generation of Poganuc were by no means *blasé* with indulgence, and raisins and almonds stood for grandeur with them. But these mottoes, which consisted of bits of confectionery wrapped up in printed couplets of sentimental poetry, were an unheard-of refinement. Bessie assured them that her papa had sent clear to Boston for them, and whoever got one would have his or her fortune told by it. The school was a small, select one, comprising the children of all ages from the best families of Poganuc. Both boys and girls, and all with great impartiality, had been invited. Miss Titcome, the teacher, quite readily promised to dismiss at three o'clock that afternoon any scholar who should bring a permission from parents, and the children nothing doubted that such a permission was obtainable. Dolly alone saw a cloud in the horizon. She had been sent away with strict injunctions not to return till evening, and children in those days never presumed to make any exceptions in obeying an absolute command of their parents.

"But, of course, you will go home at noon and ask your mother, and of course she 'll let you; won't she, girls?" said Bessie.

"Oh, certainly; of course she will," said all the older girls, "because you know a party is a thing that don't happen every day, and your mother would think it strange if you *did n't* come and ask her." So, too, thought Miss Titcome, a most exemplary, precise, and proper young lady, who always moved and spoke and thought as became a schoolmistress, so that, although she was in reality only twenty years old, Dolly considered her as a very advanced and ancient person — if anything, a little older than her father and mother.

Even she was of opinion that Dolly might properly go home to lay a case of such importance before her mother; and so Dolly rushed home after the morning school was over, running with all her might and increasing in mental excitement as she ran. Her bonnet blew off upon her shoulders, her curls flew behind her in the wind, and she most inconsiderately used up the little stock of breath that she would want to set her cause in order before her mother.

Just here we must beg any mother and housekeeper to imagine herself in the very midst of the most delicate, perplexing, and laborious of household tasks, when interruption is most irksome and perilous, suddenly called to discuss with a child some new and startling proposition to which at the moment she cannot even give a thought. Mrs. Cushing was sitting in the kitchen with Mis' Persis, by the side of a caldron of melted tallow, kept in a fluid state by the heat of a portable furnace on which it stood. A long train of half-dipped candles hung like so many stalactites from the frames on which the rods rested, and the two were patiently dipping set after set and replacing them again on the frame.

"As sure as I 'm alive! if there is n't Dolly Cushing comin' back — runnin' and tearin' like a wild cretur," said Mis' Persis. "She 'll be in here in a minute and knock everything down!"

Mrs. Cushing looked, and with a quick movement stepped to the door.

"Dolly! what are you here for? Did n't I tell you not to come home this noon?"

"Oh, mamma, there 's going to be a party at General Lewis's — Bessie's party — and the girls are all going, and may n't I go?"

"No, you can't; it 's impossible," said her mother. "Your best dress is n't ready to wear, and there 's nobody

can spend time to get you ready. Go right back to school."

"But, mamma" —

"Go!" said her mother in the decisive tone that mothers used in the old days, when arguing with children was not a possibility.

"What 's all this about?" asked the doctor, looking out of the door.

"Why," said Mrs. Cushing, "there 's going to be a party at General Lewis's, and Dolly is wild to go. It 's just impossible for me to attend to her now."

"Oh, I don't want her intimate at Lewis's; he 's a Democrat and an Episcopalian," said the doctor, and immediately he came out behind his wife.

"There; run away to school, Dolly," he said. "Don't trouble your mother; you don't want to go to parties; why, it 's foolish to think of it. Run away now, and don't think any more about it — there 's a good girl!"

Dolly turned and went back to school, the tears freezing on her cheek as she went. As for not thinking any more about it — that was impossible. When three o'clock came, scholar after scholar rose and departed, until at last Dolly was the only one remaining in the schoolroom. Miss Titcome made no comments upon the event, but so long as one scholar was left she conscientiously persisted in her duties towards her. She heard Dolly read and spell, and then occupied herself with writing a letter, while Dolly sewed upon her allotted task. Dolly's work was a linen sheet, which was to be turned. It was to be sewed up on one side and ripped out on the other — two processes which seemed especially dreary to Dolly, and more particularly so now, when she was sitting in the deserted schoolroom. Tears fell and fell on the long, uninteresting seam which seemed to stretch on and on hopelessly before her; and she thought of all the other children playing at "oats,

pease, beans, and barley grows," of feasting on almonds and raisins, and having their fortunes told by wonderful mottoes bought in Boston. The world looked cold and dark and dreary to Dolly on this her second Christmas. She never felt herself injured; she never even in thought questioned that her parents were doing exactly right by her — she only felt that just here and now the right thing was very disagreeable and very hard to bear. When Dolly came home that night the coast was clear, and the candles were finished and put away to harden in a freezing cold room; the kitchen was once more restored, and Nabby bustled about getting supper as if nothing had happened.

"I really feel sorry about poor little Dolly," said Mrs. Cushing to her husband.

"Do you think she cared much?" asked the doctor, looking as if a new possibility had struck his mind.

"Yes, indeed, poor child, she went away crying; but what could I do about it? I could n't stop to dress her."

"Wife, we must take her somewhere to make up for it," said the doctor.

Just then the stage stopped at the door and a bundle from Boston was handed in. Dolly's tears were soon wiped and dried, and her mourning was turned into joy when a large jointed London doll emerged from the bundle, the Christmas gift of her grandmother in Boston. Dolly's former darling was old and shabby, but this was of twice the size, and with cheeks exhibiting a state of the most florid health. Besides this there was, as usual in grandmamma's Christmas bundle, something for every member of the family; and so the evening went on festive wings.

Poor little Dolly! only that afternoon she had watered with her tears the dismal long straight seam, which stretched on before her as life sometimes does to us, bare, disagreeable, and cheerless. She had come home crying,

little dreaming of the joy just approaching; but before bedtime no cricket in the hearth was cheerier or more noisy. She took the new dolly to bed with her, and could hardly sleep, for the excitement of her company. Meanwhile, Hiel had brought the doctor a message to the following effect: —

"I was drivin' by Tim Hawkins's, and Mis' Hawkins she comes out and says they 're goin' to hev an apple-cuttin' there to-morrow night, and she would like to hev you and Mis' Cushin' and all your folks come — Nabby and all."

The doctor and his lady of course assented.

"Wal, then, doctor — ef it 's all one to you," continued Hiel, "I 'd like to take ye over in my new double sleigh. I 've jest got two new strings o' bells up from Boston, and I think we 'll sort o' make the snow fly. S'pose there 'd be no objections to takin' my mother 'long with ye?"

"Oh, Hiel, we shall be delighted to go in company with your mother, and we 're ever so much obliged to you," said Mrs. Cushing.

"Wal, I 'll be round by six o'clock," said Hiel.

"Then, wife," said the doctor, "we 'll take Dolly, and make up for the loss of her party."

CHAPTER XXII

THE APPLE-BEE

PUNCTUALLY at six o'clock Hiel's two horses, with all their bells jingling, stood at the door of the parsonage, whence Tom and Bill, who had been waiting with caps and mittens on for the last half hour, burst forth with irrepressible shouts of welcome.

"Take care now, boys; don't haul them buffalo skins out on t' the snow," said Hiel. "Don't get things in a muss gen'ally; wait for your ma and the doctor. Got to stow the grown folks in fust; boys kin hang on anywhere."

And so first came Mrs. Cushing and the doctor, and were installed on the back seat, with Dolly in between. Then hot bricks were handed in to keep feet warm, and the buffalo robe was tucked down securely. Then Nabby took her seat by Hiel in front, and the sleigh drove round for old Mrs. Jones. The doctor insisted on giving up his place to her and tucking her warmly under the buffalo robe, while he took the middle seat and acted as moderator between the boys, who were in a wild state of hilarity. Spring, with explosive barks, raced first on this and then on that side of the sleigh as it flew swiftly over the smooth frozen road.

The stars blinked white and clear out of a deep blue sky, and the path wound uphill among cedars and junipers and clumps of mountain-laurel, on whose broad green leaves the tufts of snow lay like clusters of white roses. The keen clear air was full of stimulus and vigor; and so Hiel's proposition to take the longest way met with enthu-

siastic welcome from all the party. Next to being a bird, and having wings, is the sensation of being borne over the snow by a pair of spirited horses who enjoy the race, apparently, as much as those they carry. Though Hiel contrived to make the ride about eight miles, it yet seemed but a short time before the party drove up to the great red farmhouse, whose lighted windows sent streams of radiant welcome far out into the night.

The fire that illuminated the great kitchen of the farmhouse was a splendid sight to behold. It is, alas, with us only a vision and memory of the past; for who in our days can afford to keep up the great fireplace, where the backlogs were cut from the giants of the forest and the forestick was as much as a modern man could lift? And then the glowing fire-palace built thereon! That architectural pile of split and seasoned wood, over which the flames leaped and danced and crackled like rejoicing genii — what a glory it was! The hearty, bright, warm hearth in those days stood instead of fine furniture and handsome pictures. The plainest room becomes beautiful and attractive by firelight, and when men think of a country and home to be fought for and defended they think of the fireside.

Mr. Timothy Hawkins was a thrifty farmer and prided himself on always having the best, and the fire that was crackling and roaring up the chimney that night was, to use a hackneyed modern expression, a "work of art." The great oak backlog had required the strength of four men to heave it into its place; and above that lay another log scarcely less in size; while the forestick was no mean bough of the same tree. A bed of bright solid coals lay stretched beneath, and the lighter blaze of the wood above was constantly sending down contributions to this glowing reservoir.

Of course, on an occasion like this, the "best room" of the house was open, with a bright fire lighting up the tall brass andirons, and revealing the neatly fitted striped carpet

of domestic manufacture, and the braided rugs, immortal monuments of the never-tiring industry of the housewife. Here first the minister and his wife and Dolly were inducted with some ceremony; but all declared their immediate preference for the big kitchen, where the tubs of rosy apples and golden quinces were standing round, and young men, maids, and matrons were taking their places to assist in the apple-bee.

If the doctor was a welcome guest in the stately circles of Poganuc Centre, he was far more at home in these hearty rural gatherings. There was never the smallest room for jealousy, on the part of his plainer people, that he cared more for certain conventional classes of society than for them, because all instinctively felt that in heart he was one of themselves. Like many of the educated men of New England, he had been a farmer's boy in early days, and all his pleasantest early recollections were connected with that simple, wholesome, healthful, rural life. Like many of the New England clergy, too, he was still to some extent a practical farmer, finding respite from brain labor in wholesome outdoor work. His best sermons were often thought out at the plough or in the cornfield, and his illustrations and enforcements of truth were those of a man acquainted with real life and able to interpret the significance of common things. His people felt a property in him as their ideal man — the man who every Sunday expressed for them, better than they could, the thoughts and inquiries and aspirations which rose dimly in their own minds.

"I could ha' said all that myself ef I 'd only hed the eddication; he puts it so one can see it can't be no other way," was the comment once made on a sermon of the doctor's by a rough but thoughtful listener; and the doctor felt more pleased with such applause than even the more cultured approval of Judge Belcher.

In the wide, busy kitchen there was room enough for all sorts of goings on. The doctor was soon comfortably seated, knee to knee, in a corner with two or three controversial-looking old farmers, who were attacking some of the conclusions of his last Sunday's sermon. Of the two results, the doctor always preferred a somewhat combative resistance to a sleepy assent to his preaching, and nothing delighted him more than a fair and square argumentative tilt, showing that the points he made had been taken. But while the doctor in his corner discussed theology, the young people around the tubs of apples were having the very best of times. The apple, from the days of Mother Eve and the times of Paris and Helen, has been a fruit full of suggestion and omen in the meetings of young men and maidens; and it was not less fruitful this evening. Our friend Hiel came to the gathering with a full consciousness of a difficult and delicate part to be sustained. It is easy to carry on four or five distinct flirtations when one is a handsome young stage-driver and the fair objects of attention live at convenient distances along the route. But when Almiry Ann and Lucindy Jane and Lucretia and Nabby are all to be encountered at one time, what is a discreet young man to do?

Hiel had come to the scene with an armor of proof in the shape of a new patent apple peeler and corer, warranted to take the skin from an apple with a quickness and completeness hitherto unimaginable. This immediately gave him a central position and drew an admiring throng about him. The process of naming an apple for each girl, and giving her the long ribbon of peel to be thrown over her head and form fateful initial letters on the floor, was one that was soon in vigorous operation, with much shrieking and laughing and opposing of claims among the young men, all of whom were forward to claim their own initials when the peeling was thrown by the girl of their

choice. And Hiel was loud in his professions of jealousy when by this mode of divination Almira Smith was claimed to be secretly favoring Seth Parmelee, and Nabby's apple-peeling thrown over her head formed a cabalistic character which was vigorously contended for both by Jim Sawin and Ike Peters. As the distinction between an I and a J is of a very shadowy nature, the question apparently was likely to remain an open one; and Hiel declared that it was plain that nobody cared for *him*, and that he was evidently destined to be an old bachelor.

It may be imagined that this sprightly circle of young folks were not the ones most particularly efficient in the supposed practical labors of the evening. They did, probably, the usual amount of work done by youths and maids together at sewing societies, church fairs, and other like occasions, where by a figure of speech they are supposed to be assisting each other. The real work of the occasion was done by groups of matrons who sat with their bright tin pans in lap, soberly chatting and peeling and cutting, as they compared notes about pies and puddings and custards, and gave each other recipes for certain Eleusinian mysteries of domestic cookery. Yet, let it not be supposed that all these women thought of nothing but cookery, for in the corner where the minister was talking were silent, attentive listeners, thoughtful souls, who had pushed their chairs nearer, and who lost not a word of the discussion on higher themes. Never was there a freer rationalism than in the inquiries which the New England theology tolerated and encouraged at every fireside. The only trouble about them was that they raised awful questions to which there is no answer, and when the doctor supposed he had left a triumphant solution of a difficulty he had often left only a rankling thorn of doubt.

A marked figure among the doctor's circle of listeners is Nabby's mother. A slight figure in a dress of Quakerlike

neatness, a thin old delicate face, with its aureole of white hair and its transparent cap-border — the expression of the face a blending of thoughtful calmness and invincible determination. Her still, patient blue eyes looked as if they habitually saw beyond things present to some far-off future. She was, in fact, one of those quiet, resolute women whose power lay more in doing than in talking. She had passed, through the gate of silence and self-abnegation, into that summer-land where it is always peace, where the soul is nevermore alone, because God is there. Now, as she sits quietly by, not a word escapes her of what her minister is saying; for though at her husband's command she has left her church, her heart is still immovably fixed in its old home. Her husband had stubbornly refused to join the social circle, though cordially invited. However, he offered no word of comment or dissent when his wife departed with all her sons to the gathering. With her boys, Mary Higgins was all-powerful. They obeyed the glance of her eye; they listened to her softest word as they never heeded the stormy imperiousness of their father.

She looks over with satisfaction to where her boys are joining with full heart in the mirth of the young people, and is happy in their happiness. The doctor comes and sits beside her, and inquires after each one; and the measure of her content is full. She does not need to explain to him why she has left her church; she sees that he understands her position and her motives; but she tells him her heart and her hopes, her ambition for her darling son Abner, who alone of all her boys has the passion for learning and aspires toward a college education; and the doctor bids her send her boy to him and he will see what can be done to help him on his way. More talk they have, and more earnest, on things beyond the veil of earth, — on the joy that underlies all the sorrows of this life and brightens the life beyond, — and the doctor

feels that in the interview he has gained more than he has given.

Long before the evening was through, the task of apple-cutting was accomplished, the tubs and pans cleared away, and the company sat about the fire discussing the nuts, apples, and cider which were passed around, reinforced by doughnuts and loaf-cake. Tales of forest life, of exploits in hunting and fishing, were recounted, and the doctor figured successfully as a *raconteur*, for he was an enthusiast in forest lore, and had had his share of adventure. In those days there was still a stirring background of wilderness life, of adventures with bears, panthers, and wild Indians, and of witches and wizards and ghostly visitors and haunted houses, to make a stimulating fireside literature; and the nine o'clock bell ringing loudly was the first break in the interest of the circle. All rose at once; and while the last greetings were exchanged Hiel and the other young men brought their horses to the door, and the whole party were, in their several sleighs, soon flying homeward.

Our little Dolly had had an evening of unmixed bliss. Everybody had petted her, and talked to her, and been delighted with her sayings and doings, and she was carrying home a paper parcel of sweet things which good Mrs. Hawkins had forced into her hand at parting. As to Hiel and Nabby, they were about on an even footing. If he had been devoted to Lucinda Jane Parsons she had distinguished Jim Sawin by marks of evident attention, not forgetting at proper intervals to pay some regard to Ike Peters; so that, as she complacently said to herself, "he did n't get ahead of *her*."

Of course, on the way home, in the sleigh with Dr. and Mrs. Cushing, there were no advantages for a settling-up quarrel; but Nabby let fly many of those brisk little missiles of sarcasm and innuendo in which her sex have so

decided a superiority over the other, and when arrived at the door of the house, announced peremptorily that she was "going straight to bed and was n't goin' to burn out candles for nobody *that* night!"

Hiel did not depart broken-hearted, however; and as he reviewed the field mentally, after his return home, congratulated himself that things were going on "'bout as well as they could be." A misunderstanding to be made up, a quarrel to be settled, was, as he viewed it, a fair stock in trade for a month to come.

CHAPTER XXIII

SEEKING A DIVINE IMPULSE

In the scenes which we have painted we have shown our Dr. Cushing mingling as man with men, living a free, natural, healthy human life. Yet underneath all this he bore always on his spirit a deeper and heavier responsibility.

The ideal of a New England minister's calling was not the mere keeping up of Sunday services, with two regular sermons, the pastoral offices of visiting the sick, performing marriages, and burying the dead. It was not merely the oversight of schools, and catechising of children, and bringing his people into a certain habitual outward routine of religion, though all these were included in it. But deeper than all these, there was laid upon his soul the yearning desire to bring every one in his flock to a living, conscious union with God; to a life whose source and purposes were above this earth and tending heavenward. In whatever scene of social life he met his people his eye was ever upon them, studying their characters, marking their mental or moral progress, hoping and praying for this final result. Besides the stated services of Sunday, our good doctor preached three or four evenings in a week in the small district schoolhouses of the outlying parishes, when the fervor of his zeal drew always a full audience to listen. More especially now, since the late political revolution had swept away the ancient prescriptive defenses of religion and morals, and thrown the whole field open to individual liberty, had the doctor felt that the clergy must make up in moral influence what had passed away of legal restraints.

With all his soul he was seeking a revival of religion; a deep, pathetic earnestness made itself felt in his preaching and prayers, and the more spiritual of his auditors began to feel themselves sympathetically affected. Of course, all the church members in good standing professed to believe truths which made life a sublime reality, and religion the one absorbing aim. The New Testament gives a glorified ideal of a possible human life, but hard are his labors who tasks himself to keep that ideal uppermost among average human beings. The coarse, the low, the mean, the vulgar, is ever thrusting itself before the higher and more delicate nature, and claiming, in virtue of its very brute strength, to be the true reality.

New England had been founded as a theocracy. It had come down to Dr. Cushing's time under laws and customs specially made and intended to form a Christian state, and yet how far it was below the teachings of the New Testament none realized so deeply as the minister himself. He was the confidant of all the conflicts between different neighborhoods, of the small envies, jealousies, and rivalries that agitated families and set one part of his parish against another. He was cognizant of all the little unworthy gossip, the low aims, the small ambitions of these would-be Christians, and sometimes his heart sank at the prospect. Yet the preaching, the prayers, the intense earnestness of the New England religious life had sometimes their hour of being outwardly felt; the sacred altar-flame that was burning in secret in so many hearts threw its light into the darkness, and an upspringing of religious interest was the result.

The quarrel which had separated Zeph Higgins from the church had spread more or less unwholesome influence through the neighborhood, and it was only through some such divine impulse as he sought that the minister could hope to bring back a better state of things. In this labor

of love he felt that he had a constant, powerful coöperative force in the silent, prayerful woman who walked by Zeph's side as a guardian angel. Had it not been for her peculiar talent for silence and peace the quarrel would have gone much further and produced wider alienation; but there is nothing that so absolutely quenches the sparks of contention as silence. Especially is this the case with the silence of a strong, determined nature, that utters itself only to God. For months Zeph had been conscious of a sort of invisible power about his wife — a power that controlled him in spite of himself. It was that mysterious atmosphere created by intense feeling without the help of words. People often, in looking on this couple, shook their heads and said, "How *could* that woman ever have married that man?" Such observers forget that the woman may see a side of the man's nature that they never see, and that often the chief reason why a man wins a woman's heart is that she fancies herself to have discerned in him that which no other could discern, an undiscovered realm peculiarly her own. The rough, combative, saturnine man known as Zeph Higgins had had his turn of being young, and his youth's blossoming-time of love, when he had set his heart on this Mary, then an orphan, alone in the world. Like many another woman, she was easily persuaded that the stormy, determined, impetuous passion thus seeking her could take no denial; was of the same nature with the kind of love she felt able to give in return — love faithful, devoted, unseeking of self, and asking only to bless. But in time marriage brought its revelations, and life lay before her a bare, cold, austere reality, with the lover changed into the toiling fellow laborer or the exacting master. A late discernment of spirit showed her that she was married to a man whose love for her was all demand, who asked everything from her and had little power of giving in return; that while he needed

her, and clung to her at times with a sort of helpless reliance, he had no power of understanding or sympathizing with her higher nature, and that her life, in all that she felt most deeply and keenly, must be a solitary one. These hours of disillusion come to many, and are often turning points in the soul's history. Rightly understood, they may prove the seed-bed where plants of the higher life strike deepest root. Mary Higgins was one of those who found in her religion the strength of her soul. The invisible Friend, whose knock is heard in every heart-trial, entered in to dwell with her, bringing the peace which the world cannot give; and henceforth she was strong in spirit, and her walk was in green pastures and by still waters.

They greatly mistake the New England religious development who suppose that it was a mere culture of the head in dry metaphysical doctrines. As in the rifts of the granite rocks grow flowers of wonderful beauty and delicacy, so in the secret recesses of Puritan life, by the fireside of the farmhouse, in the contemplative silence of austere care and labor, grew up religious experiences that brought a heavenly brightness down into the poverty of commonplace existence. The philosophic pen of President Edwards has set before us one such inner record, in the history of the wife whose saintly patience and unworldly elevation enabled him to bear the reverses which drove him from a comfortable parish to encounter the privations of missionary life among the Indians. And such experiences were not uncommon among lowly natures, who lacked the eloquence to set them forth in words. They lightened the heart, they brightened the eye, they made the atmosphere of the home peaceful.

Such was the inner life of her we speak of. At rest in herself, she asked nothing, yet was willing to give everything to the husband and children who were at once her world of duty and of love. Year in and out, she kept

step in life with a beautiful exactness, so perfect and complete in every ministry of the household that those she served forgot to thank her, as we forget to thank the daily Giver of air and sunshine. Zeph never had known anything at home but neatness, order, and symmetry, regular hours and perfect service. His wife had always been on time, and on duty, and it seemed to him like one of the immutable laws of nature that she should do so. He was proud of her housekeeping, proud of her virtues, as something belonging to himself; and though she had no direct power over his harsher moods of combativeness and self-will, she sometimes came to him as a still small voice after the earthquake and the tempest, and her words then had weight with him, precisely because they were few and seldom spoken.

She had been silent all through the stormy quarrel that had rent him away from his church. Without an argument where argument would only strengthen opposition, she let his will have its way. She went with him on Sundays to the Episcopal church, and sat there among her sons, a lowly and conscientious worshiper, carefully following a service which could not fail to bring voices of comfort and help to a devout soul like hers. Nevertheless, the service, to any one coming to it late in life and with no previous training, has its difficulties, which were to her embarrassing, and to him, in spite of his proud self-will, annoying. Zeph had the Spartan contempt for everything æsthetic, the scorn of beauty which characterized certain rough stages of New England life. He not only did not like symbolic forms, but he despised them as effeminate impertinences; and every turn and movement that he was compelled to make in his new ritualistic surroundings was aggravating to his temper. To bend the knee at the name of Jesus, to rise up reverently when the words of Jesus were about to be read in the Gospel of the day, were acts

congenial to his wife as they were irksome to him; and, above all, the idea of ecclesiastical authority, whether exercised by rector, bishop, or church, woke all the refractory nerves of opposition inherited from five generations of Puritans. So that Zeph was as little comfortable in his new position as his worst enemy could have desired. Nothing but the strength of his obstinate determination not to yield a point once taken kept him even outwardly steady. But to go back to his church, to confess himself in the wrong and make up his old quarrel with the deacon, would be worse than to stay where he was.

The tenacity and devotion with which some hard natures will cleave to a quarrel which embitters their very life-blood is one of the strange problems of our human nature. In the hereditary form of family prayer that Zeph Higgins used every day there was the customary phrase, "We are miserable sinners;" and yet Zeph, like many another man who repeats that form in the general, would rather die than confess a fault in any particular; and in this respect we must admit that he was not, after all, a very exceptional character. How often in our experience do we meet a man brave enough, when once fully committed, to turn a square corner and say "I was wrong"? If only such have a stone to cast at Zeph Higgins, the cairn will not be a very high one.

Zeph never breathed an opposing word when his wife, every Friday evening, lighted the lantern, and with all her sons about her set off to the evening prayer-meeting in the little red schoolhouse, though after his quarrel with the deacon he never went himself. Those weekly meetings, when she heard her minister and joined in the prayers and praises of her church, were the brightest hours of her life, and her serene, radiant face, following his words with rapt attention, was a help and inspiration to her pastor.

"There is a revival begun over there," he said to his

wife as they were riding home from one of his services. "It is begun in the heart of that good woman. She has long been praying for a revival, and I am confident that *her* prayers will be answered."

They were answered, but in a way little dreamed of by any one. The prayers we offer for heavenly blessings often come up in our earthly soil as plants of bitter sorrow. So it proved in this case.

CHAPTER XXIV

"IN SUCH AN HOUR AS YE THINK NOT"

ONE morning in the latter part of spring Zeph Higgins received a shock which threw his whole soul into confusion. His wife, on rising to go forth to her wonted morning cares, had fainted dead away and been found lying, apparently lifeless, on the bed, when her husband returned for his breakfast. Instantly everything was in commotion. The nearest neighbor was sent for, and restoratives applied with such skill as domestic experience could suggest, and one of the boys dispatched in all haste for the doctor, with orders to bring Nabby at once to take her mother's place. The fainting fit proved of short duration, but was followed by a violent chill and a rise of fever, and when the doctor arrived he reported a congestion of the lungs threatening the gravest results.

Forthwith the household was to be organized for sickness. A fire was kindled in the best bedroom and the patient laid there; Mis' Persis was sent for and installed as nurse; Nabby became housekeeper, and to superficial view the usual order reigned. Zeph went forth to the labors of the field, struggling with a sort of new terror; there was an evil threatening his house, against the very thought and suggestion of which he fought with all his being. His wife *could* not, *should* not, *ought* not to be sick, — and as to dying, that was not to be thought of! What could he do without her? What could any of them do without her? During the morning's work that was the problem that he kept turning and turning in his mind —

what life would be without her. Yet when Abner, who was working beside him, paused over his hoe and stood apparently lost in thought, he snapped a harsh question at him with a crack like the sound of a lash.

"What ye doin' there?"

Abner started, looked confused, and resumed his work, only saying, "I was thinking about mother."

"Nonsense! Don't make a fool of yourself. Mother 'll come all right."

"The doctor said" — said Abner.

"Don't tell me nothin' what the doctor said; I don't want to hear on 't," said Zeph in a high voice; and the two hoes worked on in silence for a while, till finally Zeph broke out again: —

"Wal! what did the doctor say? Out with it; as good say it 's think it. What *did* the doctor say? Why don't you speak?"

"He said she was a very sick woman," answered Abner.

"He 's a fool. I don't think nothin' o' that doctor's jedgment. I 'll have Dr. Sampson over from East Poganuc. Your mother 's got the best constitution of any woman in this neighborhood."

"Yes; but she has n't been well lately, and I 've seen it," said Abner.

"That 's all croakin'. Don't believe a word on 't. Mother 's been right along, stiddy as a clock; 't ain't nothin' but one o' these 'ere pesky spring colds she 's got. She 'll be up and round by to-morrow or next day. I 'll have another doctor, and I 'll get her wine and bark, and strengthenin' things, and Nabby shall do the work, and she 'll come all right enough."

"I 'm sure I hope so," said Abner.

"Hope! what d' ye say hope for? I ain't a-goin' to hope nothin' 'bout it. I know so; she 's got to git well — ain't no two ways 'bout that."

Yet Zeph hurried home an hour before his usual time and met Nabby at the door.

"Wal, ain't your mother gettin' better?"

There were tears in Nabby's eyes as she answered: —

"Oh, dear! she 's been a-raisin' blood. Doctor says it 's from her lungs. Mis' Persis says it 's a bad sign. She 's very weak — and she looks so pale!"

"They must give her strengthenin' things," said Zeph. "Do they?"

"They 're givin' what the doctor left. Her fever 's beginnin' to rise now. Doctor says we must n't talk to her, nor let her talk."

"Wal, I 'm a-goin' up to see her, anyhow. I guess I 've got a right to speak to my own wife." And Zeph slipped off his heavy cowhide boots, and went softly up to the door of the room, and opened it without stopping to knock.

The blinds were shut; it seemed fearfully dark and quiet. His wife was lying with her eyes closed, looking white and still; but in the centre of each pale cheek was the round, bright, burning spot of the rising hectic.

Mis' Persis was sitting by her with the authoritative air of a nurse who has taken full possession; come to stay and to reign. She was whisking the flies away from her patient with a feather fan, which she waved forbiddingly at Zeph as he approached.

"Mother," said he in an awestruck tone, bending over his wife, "don't you know me?"

She opened her eyes; saw him; smiled and reached out her hand. It was thin and white, burning with the rising fever.

"Don't you feel a little better?" he asked. There was an imploring eagerness in his tone.

"Oh yes; I 'm better."

"You 'll get well soon, won't you?"

"Oh yes; I shall be well soon," she said, looking at him with that beautiful bright smile. His heart sank as he looked. The smile was so strangely sweet — and all this quiet, this stillness, this mystery! She was being separated from him by impalpable shadowy forces that could not be battled with or defied. In his heart a warning voice seemed to say that just so quietly she might fade from his sight — pass away, and be forever gone. The thought struck cold to his heart, and he uttered an involuntary groan.

His wife opened her eyes, moved slightly, and seemed as if she would speak, but Mis' Persis put her hand authoritatively over her mouth. "Don't you say a word," said she.

Then turning with concentrated energy on Zeph, she backed him out of the room and shut the door upon him and herself in the entry before she trusted herself to speak. When she did, it was as one having authority.

"Zephaniah Higgins," she said, "air you crazy? Do you want to kill your wife? Ef ye come round her that way and git her a-talkin' she 'll bleed from her lungs agin, and that 'll finish her. You 've jest got to shet up and submit to the Lord, Zephaniah Higgins, and that 's what you hain't never done yit; you 've got to know that the Lord is goin' to do *his* sovereign will and pleasure with your wife, and you 've got to be still. That 's all. You can't do nothin'. We shall all do the best we can; but you 've jest got to wait the Lord's time and pleasure."

So saying, she went back into the sick-room and closed the door, leaving Zeph standing desolate in the entry. Zeph, like most church members of his day, had been trained in theology, and had often expressed his firm belief in what was in those days spoken of as the "doctrine of divine sovereignty." A man's idea of his God is often a reflection of his own nature. The image of an absolute

monarch, who could and would always do exactly as he pleased, giving no account to any one of his doings, suited Zeph perfectly as an abstract conception; but when this resistless awful Power was coming right across his path, the doctrine assumed quite another form. The curt statement made by Mis' Persis had struck him with a sudden terror, as if a flash of lightning had revealed an abyss opening under his feet. That he was utterly helpless in his Sovereign's hands he saw plainly; but his own will rose in rebellion — a rebellion useless and miserable.

His voice trembled that night as he went through the familiar words of the evening prayer; a rush of choking emotions almost stopped his utterance, and the old words, worn smooth with use, seemed to have no relation to the turbulent tempest of feeling that was raging in his heart. After prayers he threw down the Bible with an impatient bang, bolted for his room, and shut himself in alone.

"Poor father! he takes it hard," said Nabby, wiping her eyes.

"He takes everything hard," said Abner. "I don't know how we 'll get along with him, now mother is n't round."

"Well, let 's hope mother 's goin' to get well," said Nabby. "I can't — I ain't goin' to think anything else."

CHAPTER XXV

DOLLY BECOMES ILLUSTRIOUS

At the parsonage the illness in Zeph's household brought social revolution. The whole burden of family ministration, which had rested on Nabby's young and comely shoulders, fell with a sudden weight upon those of Mrs. Cushing. This was all the more unfortunate because the same exigency absorbed the services of Mis' Persis, who otherwise might have been relied on to fill the gap. But now was Dolly's hour for feeling her own importance and assuming womanly cares. She rushed to the front with enthusiasm, and attacked every branch of domestic service with a zeal not always according to knowledge, but making her on the whole quite an efficient assistance. She washed and wiped dishes, and cleared, and cleaned, and dusted, and set away, as she had seen Nabby do; she propped herself on a stool at the ironing-table and plied the irons vigorously, and resenting the suggestion that she should confine herself to towels and napkins, struck out boldly upon the boys' shirts and other complicated tasks, burning her fingers and heating her face in the determination to show her prowess and ability.

"Dolly is really quite a little woman," she overheard her mother saying to her father; and her bosom swelled with conscious pride, and she worked all the faster.

"Now, you boys must be very careful not to make any more trouble than you can help," she said, with an air of dignity, as Will and Bob burst into the kitchen and surprised her at the ironing-table. "Nabby is gone, and there is nobody to do the work but me."

"Upon my word, Mrs. Puss!" said Will, stopping short and regarding the little figure with a serio-comic air. "How long since you 've been so grand? How tall we 're getting in our own eyes — oh my!" and Will seized her off the ironing-stool, and perching her on his shoulder, danced round the table with her in spite of her indignant protests. Dolly resented this invasion of her dignity with all her little might, and the confusion called her mother down out of the chamber where she had been at work.

"Boys, I 'm astonished at you," said she. Now Mrs. Cushing had been "astonished" at these same boys for about thirteen or fourteen years, so that the sensation could not be quite overpowering at this time.

"Well, mother," said Will, with brisk assurance, setting Dolly down on her stool, "I was only giving Dolly a ride," and he looked up in her face with the confident smile that generally covered all his sins, and brought out an answering smile on the face of his mother.

"Come now, boys," she said, "Nabby has gone home; you must be good, considerate children, make as little trouble as possible, and be all the help you can."

"But, mother, Dolly was taking such grown-up airs, as if she was our mother. I *had* just to give her a lesson, to show her who she was."

"Dolly is a good, helpful little girl, and I don't know what I should do without her," said Mrs. Cushing; "she does act like a grown-up woman, and I am glad of it."

Dolly's face flushed with delight; she felt that at last she had reached the summit of her ambition: she was properly appreciated!

"And you boys," continued Mrs. Cushing, "must act like grown-up men, and be considerate and helpful."

"All right, mother; only give the orders. Bob and I can make the fires, and bring in the wood, and fill the tea-kettle, and do lots of things." And to do the boys jus-

tice, they did do their best to lighten the domestic labors of this interregnum. The exigency would have been far less serious were it not that the minister's house in those days was a sort of authorized hotel, not only for the ministerial brotherhood, but for all even remotely connected with the same, and all that miscellaneous driftwood of hospitality that the eddies of life cast ashore. The minister's table was always a nicely kept one; the parsonage was a place where it was pleasant to abide; and so the guest-chamber of the parsonage was seldom empty. In fact, this very week a certain Brother Waring, an ex-minister from East Poganuc, who wanted to consult the Poganuc doctor, came, unannounced, with his wife and trunk, and they settled themselves comfortably down.

Such inflictions were in those days received in the literal spirit of the primitive command to "use hospitality without grudging;" but when a week had passed and news came that Mrs. Higgins was going down to the grave in quick consumption, and that Nabby would be wanted at home for an indefinite period, it became necessary to find some one to fill her place at the parsonage, and Hiel Jones's mother accepted the position temporarily — considering her services in the minister's family as a sort of watch upon the walls of Zion. Not that she was by any means insensible to the opportunity of receiving worldly wages; but she wished it explicitly understood that she was not going out to service. She was "helpin' Mis' Cushing." The help, however, was greatly balanced in this case by certain attendant hindrances such as seem inseparable from the whole class of "lady helps."

Mrs. Jones had indeed a very satisfactory capability in all domestic processes; her bread was of the whitest and finest, her culinary skill above mediocrity, and she was an accomplished laundress. But so much were her spirits affected by the construction that might possibly be put on

her position in the family that she required soothing attentions and expressions of satisfaction and confidence every hour of the day to keep her at all comfortable. She had stipulated expressly to be received at the family table, and, further than this, to be brought into the room and introduced to all callers, and this being done, demeaned herself in a manner so generally abused and melancholy that poor Mrs. Cushing could not but feel that the burden which had been taken off from her muscles had been thrown with double weight upon her nerves.

After a call of any of the Town Hill aristocracy Mrs. Jones would be sure to be found weeping in secret places, because "Mrs. Colonel Davenport had looked down on her," or the governor's lady "did n't speak to her," and she "should like to know what such proud folks was goin' to do when they got to heaven!" Then there was always an implication that if ministers only did their duty all these distinctions of rank would cease, and everybody be just as good as everybody else. The poor body had never even dreamed of a kingdom of heaven where the Highest was "as him that serveth;" and what with Mrs. Jones's moans, and her tears, and her frequent sick-headaches, accompanied by abundant use of camphor, Mrs. Cushing, in some desperate moments, felt as if she would rather die doing her own work than wear herself out in the task of conciliating a substitute.

Then, though not a serious evil, it certainly was somewhat disagreeable to observe Mrs. Jones's statistical talents and habits of minute inspection, and to feel that she was taking notes which would put all the parish in possession of precise information as to the condition of Mrs. Cushing's tablecloths, towels, napkins, and all the minutiæ of her housekeeping arrangements. There is, of course, no sin or harm in such particularity; but almost every lady prefers the shades of poetic obscurity to soften the details of

her domestic interior. In those days, when the minister was the central object of thought in the parish, it was specially undesirable that all this kind of information should be distributed, since there were many matrons who had opinions all ready made as to the proper manner in which a minister's wife should expend his salary and order his household. It was, therefore, with genuine joy that, after a fortnight's care of this kind, a broad-faced, jolly African woman was welcomed by Mrs. Cushing to her kitchen in place of Mrs. Jones. Dinah was picked up in a distant parish, and entered upon her labors with an unctuous satisfaction and exuberance that was a positive relief after the recent tearful episode. It is true she was slow, and somewhat disorderly, but she was unfailingly good natured, and had no dignity to be looked after; and so there was rest for a while in the parsonage.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE VICTORY

Summer with its deep blue skies was bending over the elms of Poganuc. The daisies were white in the meadows, and the tall grass was nodding its feathery sprays of blossom. The windows of the farmhouses stood open, with now and then a pillow or a bolster lounging out of them, airing in the sunshine. The hens stepped hither and thither with a drowsy continuous cackle of contentment as they sunned themselves in the warm, embracing air. In the great elm that overhung the roof of Zeph Higgins's farmhouse was a mixed babble and confusion of sweet bird voices. An oriole from her swinging nest caroled cheerfully, and bobolinks and robins replied, and the sounds blended pleasantly with the whisper and flutter of leaves, as soft summer breezes stirred them. But over one room in that house rested the shadow of death; there, behind the closed blinds, in darkened stillness days passed by; and watchers came at night to tend and minister; and bottles accumulated on the table; and those who came entered softly and spoke with bated breath; and the doctor was a daily visitor; and it was known that the path of the quiet patient who lay there was steadily going down to the dark river.

Every one in the neighborhood knew it; for, in the first place, everybody in that vicinity, as a matter of course, knew all about everybody else; and then, besides that, Mrs. Higgins had been not only an inoffensive, but a much esteemed and valued neighbor. Her quiet step, her gentle voice, her skillful ministry, had been always at hand where

there had been sickness or pain to be relieved; and now that her time was come there was a universal sympathy. Nabby's shelves were crowded with delicacies made up and sent in by one or another goodwife to tempt the failing appetite. In the laborious, simple life that they were living in those days there was small physiological knowledge, and the leading idea in most minds in relation to the care of sickness was the importance of getting the patient to eat; for this end, dainties that might endanger the health of a well person were often sent in as a tribute to the sick. Then almost every housemother had her own favorite specific, of sovereign virtue, which she prepared and sent in to increase the army of bottles which always gathered in a sick-room. Mis' Persis, however, while graciously accepting these tributes, had her own mental reservations, and often slyly made away with the medicine in a manner that satisfied the giver and did not harm the patient. Quite often, too, Hiel Jones, returning on his afternoon course, stopped his horses at the farmhouse door and descended to hand in some offering of sympathy and good will from friends who lived miles away. Hiel did not confine himself merely to transmitting the messages of neighbors, but interested himself personally in the work of consolation, going after Nabby wherever she might be found — at the spinning-wheel, in the garret, or in the dairy below ; and Nabby, in her first real trouble, was so accessible and so confiding that Hiel found voice to say unreproved what the brisk maiden might have flouted at in earlier days.

"I 'm sure I don't know what we can do without mother," Nabby said one day, her long eyelashes wet with tears. "Home won't ever seem home without her."

"Well," answered Hiel, "I know what *I* shall want you to do, Nabby: come to me, and you and I 'll have a home all to ourselves."

And Nabby did not gainsay the word, but only laid her head on his shoulder and sobbed, and said he was a real true friend and she should never forget his kindness; and Hiel kissed and comforted her with all sorts of promises of future devotion. Truth to say, he found Nabby in tears and sorrow more attractive than when she sparkled in her gayest spirits. But other influences emanated from that shadowy room — influences felt through all the little neighborhood. Puritan life had its current expressions significant of the intense earnestness of its faith in the invisible, and among these was the phrase "a triumphant death." There seemed to be in the calm and peaceful descent of this quiet spirit to the grave a peculiar and luminous clearness that fulfilled the meaning of that idea. The "peace that passeth understanding" brightened, in the sunset radiance, into "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Her decline, though rapid and steady, was painless; and it seemed to those who looked upon her and heard her words of joy and trust that the glory so visible to her must be real and near — as if in that sick-chamber a door had in very deed been opened into heaven.

When she became aware that the end was approaching she expressed a wish that her own minister should be sent for, and Dr. Cushing came. The family gathered in her room. She was propped up on pillows, her eyes shining and cheeks glowing with the hectic flush, and an indescribable brightness of expression in her face that seemed almost divine. The doctor read from Isaiah the exultant words: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, but the Lord shall arise on thee, and his glory shall be seen on thee. The sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light to thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and

thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down nor thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." In the prayer that followed he offered thanks that God had given unto our sister the victory, and enabled her to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, while yet remaining with them as a witness of the faithfulness of the promise. He prayed that those dear to her might have grace given them to resign her wholly to the will of God and to rejoice with her in her great joy. When they rose from prayer, Zeph, who had sat in gloomy silence through all, broke out: —

"I can't — I *can't* give her up! It 's hard on me. I *can't do it*, and I won't."

She turned her eyes on him, and a wonderful expression of love and sorrow and compassion came into her face. She took his hand, saying, with a gentle gravity and composure: —

"I want to see my husband alone."

When all had left the room, he sunk down on his knees by the bed and hid his face. The bed was shaken by his convulsive sobbing. "My dear husband," she said, "you know I love you."

"Yes — yes, and you are the only one that does — the only one that can. I 'm hard and cross, and bad as the devil. Nobody *could* love me but you; and I can't — I *won't* — give you up!"

"You need n't give me up; you must come with me. I want you to come where I am; I shall wait for you; you 're an old man — it won't be long. But oh, do listen to me now. You can't come to heaven till you 've put away all hard feeling out of your heart. You must make up that quarrel with the church. When you know you 've been wrong, you must say so. I want you to promise this. Please do!"

There was silence; and Zeph's form shook with the conflict of his feelings. But the excitement and energy which had sustained the sick woman thus far had been too much for her; a blood-vessel was suddenly ruptured, and her mouth filled with blood. She threw up her hands with a slight cry. Zeph rose and rushed to the door, calling the nurse.

It was evident that the end had come.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FUNERAL

On that morning, before Dr. Cushing had left the parsonage to go to the bedside of his dying parishioner, Dolly, always sympathetic in all that absorbed her parents, had listened to the conversation and learned how full of peace and joy were those last days. When her father was gone, Dolly took her little basket and went out into the adjoining meadow for wild strawberries. The afternoon was calm and lovely; small patches of white cloud were drifting through the intense blue sky, and little flutters of breeze shook the white hats of the daisies as she wandered hither and thither among them looking for the strawberries. Over on the tallest twig of the apple-tree in the corner of the lot a bobolink had seated himself, swinging and fluttering up and down, beating his black and white wings, and singing a confused lingo about "sweetmeats and sweetmeats," and "cheer 'em and cheer 'em."

This bobolink was one of Dolly's special acquaintances. She had often seen him perched on this particular twig of the old apple-tree, doubtless because of a nest and family establishment that he had somewhere in that neighborhood, and she had learned to imitate his jargon as she crept about in the tall grass; and so they two sometimes kept up quite a lively conversation. But this afternoon she was in no mood for chattering with the bobolink, for the strings of a higher nature than his had been set vibrating; she was in a sort of plaintive, dreamy reverie — so sorry for poor Nabby, who was going to lose her mother, and

so full of awe and wonder at the bright mystery now opening on the soul that was passing away.

Dolly had pondered that verse of her catechism which says that "the souls of believers at their death are made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory," and of what that unknown glory, that celestial splendor, could be she had many thoughts and wonderings. She had devoured with earnest eyes Bunyan's vivid description of the triumphal ascent to the Celestial City through the River of Death; and sometimes at evening, when the west was piled with glorious clouds which the setting sun changed into battlements and towers of silvered gold, Dolly thought she could fancy it was something like that beautiful land. Now it made her heart thrill to think that one she had known only a little while before — a meek, quiet, patient, good woman — was just going to enter upon such glory and splendor, to wear those wonderful white robes and sing that wonderful song.

She filled her basket and then sat down to think about it. She lay back on the ground and looked up through the white daisies into the deep intense blue of the sky, wondering with a vague yearning, and wishing that she could go there too and see what it was all like. Just then, vibrating through the sunset air, came the plaintive stroke of the old meeting-house bell. Dolly knew what that sound meant — a soul "made perfect in holiness" had passed into glory; and with a solemn awe she listened as stroke after stroke tolled out the years of that patient earth-life, now forever past. It was a thrilling mystery to think of where she now was. She knew all now! she had seen! she had heard! she had entered in! Oh, what joy and wonder! Dolly asked herself should she, too, ever be so happy — she, poor little Dolly; if she went up to the beautiful gate, would they let her in? Her father and mother would certainly go there, and they would surely

want her too: could n't she go in with them? So thought Dolly, vaguely dreaming, with the daisy-heads nodding over her, and the bobolink singing, and the bell tolling, while the sun was sinking in the west. At last she heard her father calling her at the fence, and made haste to take up her basket and run to him.

The day but one after this Dolly went with her father and mother to the funeral. Funerals in those old days had no soothing accessories. People had not then learned to fill their houses with flowers, and soften by every outward appliance the deadly severity of the hard central fact of utter separation. The only leaves ever used about the dead in those days were the tansy and rosemary — bitter herbs of affliction. Every pleasant thing in the house was shrouded in white; every picture and looking-glass in its winding-sheet. The coffin was placed open in the best front room; and the mourners, enveloped in clouds of black crape, sat around. The house on this occasion was crowded; wagons came from far and near; the lower rooms were all open and filled, and Dr. Cushing's voice came faintly and plaintively through the hush of silence.

He spoke tenderly of the departed: "We have seen our sister for many weeks waiting in the land of Beulah by the River of Death. Angels have been coming across to visit her; we have heard the flutter of their wings. We have seen her rejoicing in full assurance of hope, having laid down every earthly care; we have seen her going down the dark valley, leaning on the Beloved; and now that we have met to pay the last tribute to her memory, shall it be with tears alone? If we love our sister, shall we not rejoice because she has gone to the Father? She has gone where there is no more sickness, no more pain, no more sorrow, no more death, and she shall be ever with the Lord. Let us rejoice, then, and give thanks unto God, who hath given her the victory, and let us strive like

her, by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for glory and honor and immortality."

And then arose the solemn warble of the old funeral hymn: —

"Why should we mourn departing friends
Or shake at death's alarms?
'T is but the voice that Jesus sends
To call them to his arms.

"Why should we tremble to convey
Their bodies to the tomb?
There the dear form of Jesus lay,
And scattered all the gloom.

"Thence He arose, ascending high,
And showed our feet the way;
Up to the Lord we, too, shall fly
At the great rising day.

"Then let the last loud trumpet sound,
And bid our kindred rise;
Awake! ye nations under ground;
Ye saints! ascend the skies!"

The old tune of "China," with its weird arrangement of parts, its mournful yet majestic movement, was well fitted to express that mysterious defiance of earth's bitterest sorrow, that solemn assurance of victory over life's deepest anguish, which breathes in those words. It is the major key invested with all the mournful pathos of the minor, yet breathing a grand sustained undertone of triumph — fit voice of that only religion which bids the human heart rejoice in sorrow and glory in tribulation. Then came the prayer, in which the feelings of the good man, enkindled by sympathy and faith, seemed to bear up sorrowing souls, as on mighty wings, into the regions of eternal peace.

In a general way nothing can be more impressive, more pathetic and beautiful, than the Episcopal Church funeral service, but it had been one of the last requests of the departed that her old pastor should minister at her funeral; and there are occasions when an affectionate and devout

man, penetrated with human sympathy, can utter prayers such as no liturgy can equal. There are prayers springing heavenward from devout hearts that are as much superior to all written ones as living, growing flowers outbloom the dried treasures of the herbarium. Not always, not by every one, come these inspirations; too often what is called extemporary prayer is but a form, differing from the liturgy of the Church only in being poorer and colder. But the prayer of Dr. Cushing melted and consoled; it was an uplift from the darkness of earthly sorrow into the grand certainties of the unseen; it had the undertone that can be given only by a faith to which the invisible is even more real than the things that are seen.

After the prayer one and another of the company passed through the room to take the last look at the dead. Death had touched her gently. As often happens in the case of aged people, there had come back to her face something of the look of youth, something which told of a delicate, lily-like beauty which had long been faded. There was, too, that mysterious smile, that expression of rapturous repose, which is the seal of heaven set on the earthly clay. It seemed as if the softly closed eyes must be gazing on some ineffable vision of bliss, as if, indeed, the beauty of the Lord her God was upon her.

Among the mourners at the head of the coffin sat Zeph Higgins, like some rugged gray rock — stony, calm, and still. He shed no tear, while his children wept and sobbed aloud; only when the coffin-lid was put on a convulsive movement passed across his face. But it was momentary, and he took his place in the procession to walk to the grave in grim calmness.

The graveyard was in a lovely spot on the Poganuc River. No care in those days had been bestowed to ornament or brighten these last resting-places, but Nature had taken this in hand kindly. The blue glitter of the river

sparkled here and there through a belt of pines and hemlocks on one side, and the silent mounds were sheeted with daisies, brightened now and then with golden buttercups, which bowed their fair heads meekly as the funeral train passed over them.

Arrived at the grave, there followed the usual sounds, so terrible to the ear of mourners — the setting down of the coffin, the bustle of preparation, the harsh grating of ropes as the precious burden was lowered to its last resting-place. And then, standing around the open grave, they sang: —

> "My flesh shall slumber in the ground
> Till the last trumpet's joyful sound,
> Then burst the chains, with sweet surprise,
> And in my Saviour's image rise."

Then rose the last words of prayer, in which the whole finished service and all the survivors were commended to God. It was customary in those days for the head of a family to return thanks at the grave to the friends and neighbors who had joined in the last tribute of respect to the departed. There was a moment's pause, and every eye turned on Zeph Higgins. He made a movement and stretched out his hands as if to speak, but his voice failed him, and he stopped. His stern features were convulsed with the vain effort to master his feeling.

Dr. Cushing saw his emotion and said, "In behalf of our brother I return thanks to all the friends who have given us their support and sympathy on this occasion. Let us all pray that the peace of God may rest upon this afflicted family." The gathered friends now turned from the grave and dispersed homeward. With the instinct of a true soul-physician, who divines mental states at a glance, Dr. Cushing forbore to address even a word to Zeph Higgins; he left him to the inward ministration of a higher Power.

But such tact and reticence belong only to more in-

structed natures. There are never wanting well-meaning souls who, with the very best intentions, take hold on the sensitive nerves of sorrow with a coarse hand. Deacon Peasley was inwardly shocked to see that no special attempt had been made to "improve the dispensation" to Zeph's spiritual state, and therefore felt called on to essay his skill.

"Well, my friend," he said, coming up to him, "I trust this affliction may be sanctified to you."

Zeph glared on him with an impatient movement and turned to walk away; the deacon, however, followed assiduously by his side, going on with his exhortation: —

"You know it 's no use contendin' with the Lord."

"Well, who 's ben a-contendin' with the Lord?" exclaimed Zeph, "I hain't."

The tone and manner were not hopeful, but the deacon persevered: —

"We must jest let the Lord do what he will with us and ours."

"I *hev* let him — how was I goin' to help it?"

"We must n't murmur," continued the deacon in a feebler voice, as he saw that his exhortation was not hopefully received.

"Who 's ben a-murmurin'? *I* hain't!"

"Then you feel resigned, don't you?"

"I can't help myself. I 've got to make the best on 't," said Zeph, trying to outwalk him.

"But you know" —

"LET ME ALONE, can't ye?" cried Zeph in a voice of thunder; and the deacon, scared and subdued, dropped behind, murmuring, "Drefful state o' mind! poor critter, so unreconciled! — really awful!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

DOLLY AT THE WICKET GATE

THE next Sunday rose calm and quiet over the hills of Poganuc. There was something almost preternatural in the sense of stillness and utter repose which the Sabbath day used to bring with it in those early times. The absolute rest from every earthly employment, the withholding even of conversation from temporal things, marked it off from all other days. To the truly devout the effect was something the same as if the time had been spent in heaven. On this particular dewy, fresh summer morning it seemed as if Nature herself were hushing her breath to hear the music of a higher sphere. Dolly stood at her open window looking out on the wooded hills opposite, feathered with their varied green, on the waving meadows with their buttercups and daisies, on the old apple-tree in the corner of the lot where the bobolink was tilting up and down, chattering and singing with all his might. She was thinking of what she had heard her father saying to her mother at breakfast: how the sickness and death of one good woman had been blessed to all that neighborhood, and how a revival of religion was undoubtedly begun there.

All this made Dolly very serious. She thought a great deal about heaven, and perfectly longed to be quite sure she ever should get there. She often had wished that there were such a thing in reality as a Wicket Gate, and an old Interpreter's house, and a Palace Beautiful, for then she would set right off on her pilgrimage at once, and in time get to the Celestial City. But how to get this spirit-

ual, intangible preparation she knew not. To-day she knew was a sacramental Sunday, and she should see all the good people taking that sacrificial bread and wine, but she should be left out. And how to get in! There were no Sunday-schools in those days, no hymns or teachings specially adapted to the child; and Dolly remembered to have heard serious elderly people tell of how they were brought "under conviction" and suffered for days and weeks before the strange secret of mercy was revealed to them, and she wondered how she ever should get this conviction of sin. Poor Dolly had often tried to feel very solemn and sad and gloomy, and to think herself a dreadful sinner, but had never succeeded. She was so young and so healthy — the blood raced and tingled so in her young veins; and if she was pensive and sad a little while, yet, the first she knew, she would find herself racing after Spring, or calling to her brothers, or jumping up and down with her skipping-rope, and feeling full as airy and gay as the bobolink across in the meadow. This morning she was trying her best to feel her sins and count them up; but the birds and the daisies and the flowers were a sad interruption, and she went to meeting quite dissatisfied.

When she saw the white simple table and the shining cups and snowy bread of the Communion she inly thought that the service could have nothing for her — it would be all for those grown-up, initiated Christians. Nevertheless, when her father began to speak she was drawn to listen to him by a sort of pathetic earnestness in his voice. The doctor was feeling very earnestly and deeply, and he had chosen a theme to awaken responsive feeling in his church. His text was the declaration of Jesus, "I call you not servants, but friends;" and his subject was Jesus as the soul-friend offered to every human being. Forgetting his doctrinal subtleties, he spoke with all the simplicity and tenderness of a rich nature concerning the faithful, generous,

tender love of Christ, how he cared for the soul's wants, how he was patient with its errors, how he gently led it along the way of right, how he was always with it, teaching its ignorance, guiding its wanderings, comforting its sorrows, with a love unwearied by faults, unchilled by ingratitude, till he brought it through the darkness of earth to the perfection of heaven.

Real, deep, earnest feeling inclines to simplicity of language, and the doctor spoke in words that even a child could understand. Dolly sat absorbed, her large blue eyes gathering tears as she listened; and when the doctor said, "Come, then, and trust your soul to this faithful Friend," Dolly's little heart throbbed "I will." And she did. For a moment she was discouraged by the thought that she had not had any conviction of sin; but like a flash came the thought that Jesus could give her that as well as anything else, and that she could trust him for the whole. And so her little earnest child-soul went out to the wonderful Friend. She sat through the sacramental service that followed with swelling heart and tearful eyes, and walked home filled with a new joy. She went up to her father's study and fell into his arms, saying, "Father, I have given myself to Jesus, and he has taken me."

The doctor held her silently to his heart a moment, and his tears dropped on her head.

"Is it so?" he said. "Then has a new flower blossomed in the kingdom this day."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CONFLICT

THERE is one class of luckless mortals in this world of ours whose sorrows, though often more real than those of other people, never bring them any sympathy. It is those in whom suffering excites an irritating conflict, which makes them intolerable to themselves and others. The more they suffer the more severe, biting, and bitter become their words and actions. The very sympathy they long for, by a strange contrariness of nature they throw back on their friends as an injury. Nobody knows where to have them, or how to handle them, and when everybody steers away from them they are inwardly desolate at their loneliness.

After the funeral train had borne away from the old brown farmhouse the silent form of her who was its peace, its light, its comfort, Zeph Higgins wandered like an unquiet spirit from room to room, feeling every silent memorial of her who was no longer there as a stab in the yet throbbing wound. Unlovely people are often cursed with an intense desire to be loved, and the more unlovely they grow the more intense becomes this desire. His love for his wife had been unusually strong in the sense of what is often called loving — that is, he needed her, depended on her, and could not do without her. He was always sure that she loved him; he was always sure of her patient ear to whatever he wished to say, of her wish to do to her utmost whatever he wanted her to do. Then he was not without a certain sense of the beauty and purity of her character, and had a sort of almost superstitious confidence

in her prayers and goodness, like what the Italian peasant has in his patron saint. He felt a sort of helplessness and terror at the idea of facing life without her. Besides this, he was tormented by a secret unacknowledged sense of his own unloveliness; he was angry with himself — cursed himself, called himself hard names; and he who quarrels with himself has this disadvantage, that his adversary is inseparably his companion — lies down and rises, eats, drinks, and sleeps with him.

What intensified this conflict was the remembrance of his wife's dying words, enjoining on him the relinquishment of the bitter quarrel which had alienated him from his church and his neighbors, and placed her in so false a position.

He knew that he was in the wrong; he knew that she was in the right, and that those words spoken on her death-bed were God's voice to him. But every nerve and fibre in him seemed to rebel and resist; he would not humble himself; he would not confess; he would not take a step toward reconciliation. The storm that was raging within expressed itself outwardly in an impatience and irritability which tried his children to the utmost. Poor Nabby did her best to assume in the family all her mother's cares, but was met at every turn by vexatious fault-finding.

"There now!" he said, coming out one morning, "where 's my stockings? Everything 's being neglected — not a pair to put on!"

"Oh yes, father, I sat up and mended your stockings last night before I went to bed. I did n't go into your room, because I was afraid of waking you; but here they are on my basket."

"Give 'em here, then!" said Zeph harshly. "I want my things where I know where they are. Your mother always had everything ready so I did n't have to ask for it."

"Well, I never shall be as good as mother if I try till I 'm gray," said Nabby impatiently.

"Don't you be snapping back at me," said Zeph. "But it 's jest so everywhere. Nobody won't care for me now; I don't expect it."

"Well, father, I 'm sure I try the best I can, and you keep scolding me all the time. It 's discouraging."

"Oh yes, I 'm a devil, I suppose. Everybody 's right but me. Well, I shall be out of the way one of these days, and nobody 'll care. There ain't a critter in the world cares whether I 'm alive or dead — not even my own children."

The sparks flashed through the tears in Nabby's eyes. She was cut to the soul by the cruel injustice of these words, and a hot and hasty answer rose to her lips, but was smothered in her throat. Nabby had become one of the converts of the recently commenced revival of religion, and had begun to lay the discipline of the Christian life on her temper and her tongue, and found it hard work. As yet she had only attained so far as repression and indignant silence, while the battle raged tempestuously within.

"I 'd like just to go off and leave things to take care of themselves," she said to herself, "and then he 'd see whether I don't do anything. Try, and try, and try, and not a word said — nothing but scold, scold, scold. It 's too bad! Flesh and blood can't stand everything! Mother did, but I ain't mother. I must try to be like her, though; but it 's dreadful hard with father. How did mother ever keep so quiet and always be so pleasant? She used — to pray a great deal. Well, I must pray."

Yet if Nabby could have looked in at that moment and seen the misery in her father's soul her indignation would have been lost in pity; for Zeph in his heart knew that Nabby was a good, warm-hearted girl, honestly trying her very best to make her mother's place good. He knew it,

and when he was alone and quiet he felt it so that tears came to his eyes; and yet this miserable, irritable demon that possessed him had led him to say these cruel words to her — words that he cursed himself for saying the hour after. But on this day the internal conflict was raging stronger than ever. The revival in the neighborhood was making itself felt and talked about, and the Friday evening prayer-meeting in the schoolhouse was at hand.

Zeph was debating with himself whether he would take the first step towards reconciliation with his church by going to it. His wife's dying words haunted him, and he thought he might at least go as far as this in the right direction; but the mere suggestion of the first step roused a perfect whirlwind of opposition within him. Certain moral conditions are alike in all minds, and this stern, gnarled, grizzled old New England farmer had times when he felt exactly as Milton has described a lost archangel as feeling: —

> "Oh, then, at last relent! Is there no place
> Left for repentance? none for pardon left?
> None left but by submission, and that word
> Disdain forbids me and my dread of shame."

It is curious that men are not generally ashamed of any form of anger, wrath, or malice; but of the first step towards a nobler nature — the confession of a wrong — they are ashamed. Never had Zeph been more intolerable and unreasonable to his sons in the field-work than on this day. He was too thoroughly knit up in the habits of a Puritan education to use any form of profane language, but no man knew so well how to produce the startling effect of an oath without swearing; and this day he drove about the field in such a stormy manner that his sons, accustomed as they were to his manners, were alarmed.

"Tell you what," said one of the boys to Abner, "the old man 's awful cranky to-day. Reely seems as if he was a little bit sprung. I don't know but he 's going crazy!"

CHAPTER XXX

THE CRISIS

It was a warm, soft June evening. The rosy tints of sunset were just merging into brown shadows over the landscape, the frogs peeped and gurgled in the marshes, and the whippoorwills were beginning to answer each other from the thick recesses of the trees, when the old ministerial chaise of Dr. Cushing might have been seen wending its way up the stony road to the North Poganuc schoolhouse.

The doctor and his wife were talking confidentially, and Dolly, seated between them, entered with eager sympathy into all they were saying. They were very happy, with a simple, honest, earnest happiness, for they hoped that the great object of his life and labors was now about to be accomplished, that the power of a Divine Influence was descending to elevate and purify and lift the souls of his people to God.

"My dear, I no longer doubt," he said. "The presence of the Lord is evidently with us. If only the church will fully awaken to their duty we may hope for a harvest now."

"What a pity," answered Mrs. Cushing, "that that old standing quarrel of Zeph Higgins and the church cannot be made up; his children are all deeply interested in religion, but he stands right in their way."

"Why don't you talk to him, papa?" asked Dolly.

"Nobody can speak to him but God, my child; there 's a man that nobody knows how to approach."

Dolly reflected silently on this for some minutes, and then said: —

"Papa, do you suppose Christ loves him? Did he die for him?"

"Yes, my child. Christ loved and died for all."

"Do you think *he believes* that?" asked Dolly earnestly.

"I 'm afraid he does n't think much about it," answered her father. Here they came in sight of the little schoolhouse. It seemed already crowded. Wagons were tied along the road, and people were standing around the doors and windows. The doctor and Mrs. Cushing made their way through the crowd to the seat behind the little pine table. He saw in the throng not merely the ordinary attendance at prayer-meetings, but many of the careless and idle class who seldom were seen inside a church. There were the unusual faces of Abe Bowles and Liph Kingsley and Mark Merrill, who had left the seductions of Glazier's bar-room to come over and see whether there was really any revival at North Poganuc, and not perhaps without a secret internal suggestion that to be converted would be the very best thing for them temporally as well as spiritually. Liph's wife, a poor, discouraged, forsaken-looking woman, had persuaded him to come over with her, and sat there praying, as wives of drunken men often pray, for some help from above to save him, and her, and her children.

Nothing could be rougher and more rustic than the old schoolhouse, — its walls hung with cobwebs; its rude slab benches and desks hacked by many a schoolboy's knife; the plain, ink-stained pine table before the minister, with its two tallow candles, whose dim rays scarcely gave light enough to read the hymns. There was nothing outward to express the real greatness of what was there in reality.

There are surroundings that make us realize objectively the grandeur of the human soul and the sublimity of the possibilities which Christianity opens to it. The dim cathedral, whose arches seem to ascend to the skies, from whose

distant recesses pictured forms of saints and angels look down, whose far-reaching aisles thrill with chants solemn and triumphant, while clouds of incense arise at the holy altar, and white-robed priests and kneeling throngs prostrate themselves before the Invisible Majesty — all this "pomp of dreadful sacrifice" enkindles the ideas of the infinite and the eternal, and makes us feel how great, how glorious, how mysterious and awful is the destiny of man. But the New England Puritan had put the ocean between him and all such scenic presentations of the religious life. He had renounced every sensuous aid, and tasked himself to bring his soul to face the solemn questions of existence and destiny in their simple nakedness, without drapery or accessories; there were times in the life of an earnest minister when these truths were made so intensely vivid and effective as to overbear all outward disadvantages of surrounding; and to-night the old schoolhouse, though rude and coarse as the manger of Bethlehem, like that seemed hallowed by the presence of a God.

From the moment the doctor entered he was conscious of a present Power. There was a hush, a stillness, and the words of his prayer seemed to go out into an atmosphere thrilling with emotion; and when he rose to speak he saw the countenances of his parishioners with that change upon them which comes from the waking up of the soul to higher things. Hard, weather-beaten faces were enkindled and eager; every eye was fixed upon him; every word he spoke seemed to excite a responsive emotion.

The doctor read from the Old Testament the story of Achan. He told how the host of the Lord had been turned back because there was one in the camp who had secreted in his tent an accursed thing. He asked, "Can it be now, and here, among us who profess to be Christians, that we are secreting in our hearts some accursed thing that prevents the good Spirit of the Lord from working among us?

Is it our pride? Is it our covetousness? Is it our hard feeling against a brother? Is there anything that we know to be wrong that we refuse to make right — anything that we know belongs to God that we are withholding? If we Christians lived as high as we ought, if we lived up to our professions, would there be any sinners unconverted? Let us beware how we stand in the way. If the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted? Oh, my brethren, let us not hinder the work of God. I look around on this circle and I miss the face of a sister that was always here to help us with her prayers; now she is with the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, with the spirits of the just made perfect. But her soul will rejoice with the angels of God if she looks down and sees us all coming up to where we ought to be. God grant that her prayers may be fulfilled in us. Let us examine ourselves, brethren; let us cast out the stumbling-block, that the way of the Lord may be prepared."

The words, simple in themselves, became powerful by the atmosphere of deep feeling into which they were uttered; there were those solemn pauses, that breathless stillness, those repressed breathings, that magnetic sympathy that unites souls under the power of one overshadowing conviction. When the doctor sat down suddenly there was a slight movement, and from a dark back seat rose the gaunt form of Zeph Higgins. He was deathly pale, and his form trembled with emotion. Every eye was fixed upon him, and people drew in their breath, with involuntary surprise and suspense.

"Wal, I must speak," he said. "*I'm* a stumbling-block. I've allers ben one. I hain't never ben a Christian — that's jest the truth on't. I never hed oughter 'a' ben in the church. I've ben all wrong — *wrong* — WRONG! I knew I was wrong, but I would n't give up. It's ben jest

my awful WILL. I 've set up my will agin God Almighty. I 've set it agin my neighbors — agin the minister and agin the church. And now the Lord 's come out agin me; he 's struck me down. I know he 's got a right — he can do what he pleases — but I ain't resigned — not a grain. I submit 'cause I can't help myself; but my heart 's hard and wicked. I expect my day of grace is over. I ain't a Christian, and I can't be, and I shall go to hell at last, and sarve me right!"

And Zeph sat down, grim and stony, and the neighbors looked one on another in a sort of consternation. There was a terrible earnestness in those words that seemed to appall every one and prevent any from uttering the ordinary commonplaces of religious exhortation. For a few moments the circle was silent as the grave, when Dr. Cushing said, "Brethren, let us pray;" and in his prayer he seemed to rise above earth and draw his whole flock, with all their sins and needs and wants, into the presence-chamber of heaven. He prayed that the light of heaven might shine into the darkened spirit of their brother; that he might give himself up utterly to the will of God; that we might all do it, that we might become as little children in the kingdom of heaven. With the wise tact which distinguished his ministry he closed the meeting immediately after the prayer with one or two serious words of exhortation. He feared lest what had been gained in impression might be talked away did he hold the meeting open to the well-meant, sincere, but uninstructed efforts of the brethren to meet a case like that which had been laid open before them.

After the service was over and the throng slowly dispersed, Zeph remained in his place, rigid and still. One or two approached to speak to him; there was, in fact, a tide of genuine sympathy and brotherly feeling that longed to express itself. He might have been caught up in this

powerful current and borne into a haven of peace, had he been one to trust himself to the help of others: but he looked neither to the right nor to the left; his eyes were fixed on the floor; his brown, bony hands held his old straw hat in a crushing grasp; his whole attitude and aspect were repelling and stern to such a degree that none dared address him. The crowd slowly passed on and out. Zeph sat alone, as he thought; but the minister, his wife, and little Dolly had remained at the upper end of the room. Suddenly, as if sent by an irresistible impulse, Dolly stepped rapidly down the room and with eager gaze laid her pretty little timid hand upon his shoulder, crying, in a voice tremulous at once with fear and with intensity, "Oh, why do you say that you cannot be a Christian? Don't you know that Christ loves you?"

Christ loves you! The words thrilled through his soul with a strange, new power; he opened his eyes and looked astonished into the little earnest, pleading face.

"Christ loves you," she repeated; "oh, do believe it!"

"Loves me!" he said slowly. "Why should he?"

"But he does; he loves us all. He died for us. He died for you. Oh, believe it. He'll help you; he'll make you feel right. Only trust him. Please say you will!"

Zeph looked at the little face earnestly, in a softened, wondering way. A tear slowly stole down his hard cheek.

"Thank'e, dear child," he said.

"You will believe it?"

"I'll try."

"You will trust Him?"

Zeph paused a moment, then rose up with a new and different expression in his face, and said in a subdued and earnest voice, "*I will.*"

"Amen!" said the doctor, who stood listening; and he silently grasped the old man's hand.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE JOY OF HARVEST

When Zeph turned from the little red schoolhouse to go home, after the prayer-meeting, he felt that peace which comes after a great interior crisis has passed. He had, for the first time in his life, yielded his will, absolutely and thoroughly. He had humbled himself, in a public confession of wrong-doing, before all his neighbors, before those whom he had felt to be enemies. He had taken the step convulsively, unwillingly, constrained thereto by a mighty, overmastering power which wrought within him. He had submitted, without love, to the simple, stern voice of conscience and authority — the submission of a subject to a monarch, not that of a child to a father. Just then and there, when he felt himself crushed, lonely, humbled, and despairing, the touch of that child's hand on his, the pleading, childish face, the gentle childish voice, had spoken to him of the love of Christ.

There are hard, sinful, unlovely souls, who yet long to be loved, who sigh in their dark prison for that tenderness, that devotion, of which they are consciously unworthy. Love might redeem them; but who can love them? There is a fable of a prince doomed by a cruel enchanter to wear a loathsome, bestial form till some fair woman should redeem him by the transforming kiss of love. The fable is a parable of the experience of many a lost human soul. The religion of Christ owes its peculiar power to its revealing a Divine Lover, the Only Fair, the Altogether Beautiful, who can love the unlovely back into perfectness. The love

of Christ has been the dissolving power that has broken the spells and enchantments which held human souls in bondage and has given them power to rise to the beauty and freedom of the sons of God. As Zeph walked homeward through the lonely stillness of the night, again and again the words thrilled through his soul, "*Christ loves you*" — and such tears as he had never wept before stood in his eyes, as he said wonderingly, "Me — me? Oh, is it possible? Can it be?" And Christ died for him! He had known it all these years, and never thanked him, never loved him. The rush of new emotion overpowered him; he entered his house, walked straight to the great family Bible that lay on a stand in the best room of the house; it was the very room where the coffin of his wife had stood, where he had sat, stony and despairing, during the funeral exercises. Zeph opened the Bible at random and began turning the leaves, and his eye fell on the words, "*Unto Him that* LOVED US and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us to our God kings and priests, to him be glory!" His heart responded with a strange new joy — a thrill of hope that he, too, might be washed from his sins.

Who can read the awful mysteries of a single soul? We see human beings, hard, harsh, earthly, and apparently without an aspiration for anything high and holy; but let us never say that there is not far down in the depths of any soul a smothered aspiration, a dumb, repressed desire to be something higher and purer, to attain the perfectness to which God calls it. Zeph felt at this moment that Christ who so loved him could purify him, could take away his pride and willfulness; and he fell on his knees, praying without words, but in the spirit of him of old who cried, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." As he prayed a great peace fell upon him, a rest and stillness of soul such as he had never felt before; he lay down that night and slept the sleep of a little child.

But when next day Zeph Higgins walked into Deacon Dickenson's store, and of his own accord offered to put back the water-pipes that led to his spring, and to pay whatever cost and damage the deacon might have incurred by their having been thrown out, there was then no manner of doubt that some higher power than that of man had been at work in his soul. The deacon himself was confounded, almost appalled, by the change that had come over his neighbor. He had been saying all his life that the grace of God could do anything and convert anybody, but he never expected to see a conversion like that. Instead of grasping eagerly at the offered reparation, he felt a strange emotion within himself, a sort of choking in his throat; and now that he saw the brother with whom he had contended yielding so unconditionally, he began to question himself whether he had no wrong to confess on his side.

"Wal now, I expect I've ben wrong too," he said. "We ain't perfectly sanctified, none on us, and I know I hain't done quite right, and I hain't felt right. I got my back up, and I've said things I had n't orter. Wal, we'll shake hands on't. I ain't perticklar 'bout them water-pipes now; we'll let bygones be bygones."

But Zeph had set his heart on reparation, and here was a place where the pertinacity of his nature had an honest mission; so by help of reference to one or two neighbors as umpires the whole loss was finally made good and the long-standing controversy with all its ill feeling settled and buried forever out of sight.

The news of this wonderful change spread through all the town.

"I declar' for 't," said Liph Kingsley to Bill Larkins, "this 'ere's a reel thing, and it's time for me to be a-thinkin'. I've got a soul to be saved too, and I mean to quit drinkin' and seek the Lord."

"Poh!" said Bill, "you may say so and think so; but you won't do it. You'll never hold out."

"Don't you believe that; Christ will help you," said Zeph Higgins, who had overheard the conversation. "He has helped me; he can help you. He can save to the uttermost. There 't is in the Bible — try it. We 'll all stand by ye."

A voice like this from old Zeph Higgins impressed the neighbors as being almost as much of a miracle as if one of the gray cliffs of old Bluff Head had spoken; but his heart was full, and he was ready everywhere to testify to the love that had redeemed him. No exhorter in the weekly prayer-meeting spoke words of such power as he. The few weeks that followed were marked in the history of the town. Everywhere the meetings for preaching and prayer were crowded. Glazier's bar-room was shut up for want of custom, and Glazier himself renounced the selling of liquor and became one of the converts of the revival. For a while every member of the church in the village acted as if the wonderful things which they all professed to believe were really true — as if there were an immortality of glory to be gained or lost by our life here.

The distinction between the aristocracy of Town Hill and the outlying democracy of the farming people was merged for the time in a sense of a higher and holier union. Colonel Davenport and Judge Gridley were seen with Dr. Cushing in the schoolhouses of the outlying districts, exhorting and praying, and the farmers from the distant hills crowded in to the Town Hill meetings. For some weeks the multitude was of one heart and one soul. A loftier and mightier influence overshadowed them, under whose power all meaner differences sunk out of sight. Such seasons as these are like warm showers that open leaf and flower, buds that have been long forming. Everybody in those days that attended Christian services had more or less of good purposes, of indefinite aspiration to be better, of intentions that related to some future. The revival

brought these out in the form of an immediate practical purpose, a definite, actual beginning in a new life.

"Well, mother," said Hiel Jones, "I 've made up my mind to be a Christian. I 've counted the cost, and it will cost something, too. I was a-goin' up to Vermont to trade for a team o' hosses, and I can't make the trade I should 'a' made. If I jine the church I mean to live up to 't, and I can't make them sharp trades fellers do. I could beat 'em all out o' their boots," said Hiel, with rather a regretful twinkle in his eye, "but I won't; I 'll do the right thing, ef I don't make so much by 't. Nabby and me 's both agreed 'bout that. We shall jine the church together, and be married as soon as I get back from Vermont. I allers meant to git religion some time — but somehow, lately, I 've felt that now is the time."

On one bright autumnal Sabbath of that season the broad aisle of the old meeting-house was filled with candidates solemnly confessing their faith and purpose to lead the Christian life. There, standing side by side, were all ages, from the child to the gray-haired man. There stood Dolly with her two brothers, her heart thrilling with the sense of the holy rite in which she was joining; there Nabby and Hiel side by side; there all the sons of Zeph Higgins; and there, lastly, the gray, worn form of old Zeph himself. Although enrolled as a church member he had asked to stand up and take anew those vows of which he had never before understood the meaning or felt the spirit, and thus reunite himself with the church from which he had separated. That day was a recompense to Dr. Cushing for many anxieties and sorrows. He now saw fully that though the old régime of New England had forever passed, yet there was still in the hands of her ministry that mighty power which Paul was not ashamed to carry to Rome as adequate to regenerate a world. He saw that intemperance and profanity and immorality could be subdued by the

power of religious motive working in the hearts of individual men, taking away the desire to do evil, and that the Gospel of Christ is to-day, as it was of old and ever will be, the power of God and the wisdom of God to the salvation of every one that believeth.

CHAPTER XXXII

SIX YEARS LATER

Six years step softly, with invisible footsteps, over the plain of life, bearing us on with an insensible progress. Six years of winter snows and spring thaws, of early bluebirds and pink Mayflower buds under leafy banks, of anemone, crowfoot, and violet in the fields, of apple blossoms in the orchards, and new green leaves in the forest; six years of dark green summers in the rustling woods, of fire-lilies in the meadow-lots, and scarlet lobelias by the water-brooks, of roses and lilies and tall phloxes in the gardens; six years of autumnal golden-rod and aster, of dropping nuts and rainbow-tinted forests, of ripened grain and gathered corn, of harvest home and Thanksgiving proclamation and gathering of families about the home table to consider the loving-kindness of the Lord: — by such easy stages, such comings and goings, is our mortal pilgrimage marked off. When the golden-rod and aster have bloomed for us sixty or seventy seasons, then we are near the banks of the final river, we are coming to the time of leaving the flowers of earth for the flowers of paradise.

The six years in Poganuc had brought their changes, not in external nature, for that remained quiet and beautiful as ever; the same wooded hills, with their sylvan shades and hidden treasures of fruits and flowers, the same brown, sparkling river, where pickerel and perch darted to and fro, and trout lurked in cool, shadowy hollows; but the old graveyard bore an added stone or two; mounds wet with bitter tears had grown green and flowery, and peaceable

fruits of righteousness had sprung up from harvests sown there in weeping.

As to the parsonage and its inmates, six years had added a little sprinkle of silver to the doctor's head, and a little new learning of the loving-kindness of the Lord to his heart. The fruits of the revival gathered into his church were as satisfactory as ordinary human weakness allows. The doctor was even more firmly seated in the respect and affection of his parish than in old days, when the ministry was encompassed by the dignities and protections of law. Poganuc was a town where an almshouse was almost a superfluous institution, and almsgiving made difficult by the fact that there were no poor people; for since the shutting of Glazier's bar-room, and the reformation of a few noted drunkards, there was scarce anybody not in the way of earning a decent and comfortable living. Such were our New England villages in the days when its people were of our own blood and race, and the pauper population of Europe had not as yet been landed upon our shores.

As to the characters of our little story, they, also, had moved on a stage in the journey of life. Hiel Jones had become a thriving man; had bought a share in the stage-line that ran through the town, and owned the finest team of horses in the region. He and our friend Nabby were an edifying matrimonial firm, comfortably established at housekeeping in a trim, well-kept dwelling not far from the parsonage, with lilac bushes over the front windows, and red peonies and yellow lilies in the dooryard. A sturdy youngster of three years, who toddled about, upsetting matters generally, formed a large part of the end and aim of Nabby's existence. To say the truth, this young, bright-eyed, curly-pated slip of humanity was enough to furnish work for a dozen women, for he did mischief with a rapidity, ingenuity, and energy that was perfectly astonishing. What small efforts the parents made in the direc-

tion of family government were utterly frustrated by the fond and idolatrous devotion of old Zeph, who evidently considered it the special privilege of a grandfather to spoil the rising generation. Scarce a day passed that Zeph was not at the house, his pockets stuffed with apples, cakes, or nuts for the boy. The old man bowed his gray head to the yoke of youth; he meekly did the infant's will: he was the boy's horse and cantered for him, he was a cock and crowed for him, he was a hen and cackled for him; he sacrificed dignity and consistency at those baby feet as the wise men of old laid down their gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Zeph had ripened like a winter apple. The hard, snarly astringency of his character had grown sweet and mild. His was a nature capable of a great and lasting change. When he surrendered his will to his God he surrendered once for all, and so the peace of God fell upon him and kept him. He was a consistent and most useful member of the church, and began to be known in the neighborhood by the semi-affectionate title of "Uncle Zeph," a sort of brevet rank which indicated a certain general confidence in his disposition to neighborly good offices. The darling wish of his wife's heart had been accomplished in his eldest son Abner. He had sent him through college, sparing no labor and no hardship in himself to give the youth every advantage. And Abner had proved an able scholar; his college career had been even brilliant, and he had now returned to his native place to pursue his theological studies under Dr. Cushing.

It will be well remembered that in the former days of New England there were no specific theological institutions, but the young candidate for the ministry took his studies under the care of some pastor, who directed his preparatory course and initiated him into his labors, and this course of things once established was often continued from choice even after institutions of learning were founded.

The doctor had an almost paternal pride in this offshoot that had grown up in his parish; he taught him with enthusiasm; he took him in his old chaise to the associations and ministerial meetings about the state, and gave him every opportunity to exercise his gifts in speaking. It was a proud Sunday for old Zeph when his boy preached his first sermon in the doctor's pulpit. The audience in the Poganuc meeting-house, as we have indicated, was no mean one in point of education, ability, and culture, but every one saw and commended the dignity and self-possession with which the young candidate filled the situation, and there was a universal approval of his discourse from even the most critical of his audience. But the face and figure of old Zeph as he leaned forward in his seat, following with breathless eagerness every word; his blue eyes kindling, the hard lines of his face relaxing into an expression of absorbed and breathless interest, would have made a study for a painter. Every point in the argument, the flash of every illustration, the response to every emotion, could have been read in his face as in an open book; and when after service the young candidate received the commendations of Colonel Davenport, Judge Belcher, and Judge Gridley, Zeph's cup of happiness was full. Abner was an exception to the saying that a prophet hath no honor in his own country, for both classes in society vied with each other to do him honor. The farming population liked him for being one of themselves, the expression of what they felt themselves capable of being and becoming under similar advantages; while the more cultivated class really appreciated the talent and energy of the young man, and were the better pleased with it as having arisen in their own town. So his course was all fair, until, as Fate would have it, he asked one thing too much of her — and thereof came a heartache.

Our little friend Dolly had shot up into a blooming and beautiful maiden — warm hearted, enthusiastic, and whole-souled as we have seen her in her childhood. She was in everything the sympathetic response that parents love to find in a child. She entered with her whole soul into all her father's feelings and plans, and had felt and expressed such an honest, frank, and hearty friendliness to the young man, such an interest in his success, that the poor youth was beguiled into asking more than Dolly could give. Modern young ladies, who count and catalogue their victims, would doubtless be amused to have seen Dolly's dismay at her unexpected and undesired conquest. The recoil was so positive and decided as to be beyond question, but Dolly's conscience was sorely distressed. She had meant nothing but the ordinary loving-kindness of a good and generous heart. She had wanted to make him happy, and had ended in making him apparently quite miserable; and Dolly was sincerely afflicted about it. What had she done? Had she done wrong? She never thought — never dreamed — of such a thing.

The fact was that Dolly had those large, earnest, persuasive eyes that are very dangerous, and sometimes seem to say more than they mean; and she had quick, sudden smiles, and twinkling dimples, and artless, honest ways, and so much general good will and kindliness, that one might pardonably be deceived by her. It is said that there are lakes whose waters are so perfectly transparent that they deceive the eye as to their depth. Dolly was like these crystal waters; with all her impulsive frankness there was a deep world within — penetralia that had been yet uninvaded — and there she kept her ideals. The man she *might* love was one of the immortals, not in the least like a blushing young theological student in a black coat, with a hymn-book under his arm. Precisely what he was she had never been

near enough to see; but she knew in a minute what he was *not*. Therefore she had said "No" with a resolute energy that admitted of no hope, and yet with a distress and self-reproach that was quite genuine.

This was Dolly's first real trouble.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE DOCTOR MAKES A DISCOVERY

"WHY, wife," said the doctor, pushing up his spectacles on his forehead and looking up from his completed sermon, "our little Dolly is really a grown-up young lady."

"Well, of course, what should she be?" rejoined Mrs. Cushing, with the decisive air which becomes the feminine partner on strictly feminine ground; "she 's taller than I am, and she 's a handsome girl, too."

"I don't think," said the doctor, assuming a confidential tone, "that there 's a girl in our meeting-house to be compared with her — there really is not."

"There is no great fault to be found with Dolly's looks," said Mrs. Cushing, as she turned a stocking she had been darning. "Dolly always was pretty."

"Well, what do you think Higgins has been saying to me about her?" continued the doctor.

"Some nonsense, I suppose," said Mrs. Cushing, "something he might as well have left unsaid, for all the good it will do."

"Now, my dear, Higgins is going to make one of the leading ministers of the state. He has a bright, strong, clear mind; he is a thorough scholar and a fine speaker, and I have had a letter from the church in Northboro' about settling him there."

"All very well. I 'm sure I 'm glad of it, with all my heart," said Mrs. Cushing; "but if he has any thoughts of our Dolly the sooner he gets them out of his head the better for him. Dolly has felt very kindly to him, as she does

to everybody; she has been interested in him simply and only as a friend; but any suggestion of particular interest on his part would exceedingly annoy her. You had better speak very decidedly to him to this effect. You can say that I understand my daughter's mind, and that it will be very painful to her to have anything more said on the subject."

"Well, really, I 'm sorry for Higgins," said the doctor; "he 's such a good-hearted, worthy fellow, and I believe he 's very deep in love."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Cushing decidedly; "but our Dolly can't marry every good-hearted, worthy fellow that comes in her way, if he is in love; and I 'm sure I 'm in no hurry to give her away, — she is the light and music of the house."

"So she is," said the doctor; "I could n't do without her; but I pity poor Higgins."

"Oh, you may spare your pity; he won't break his heart. Never fear. Men never die of that. There 'll be girls enough in his parish, and he 'll be married six months after he gets a place — ministers always are."

The doctor made some few corrections in the end of his sermon without contradicting this unceremonious statement of his wife's.

"But," continued Mrs. Cushing, "the thing is a trial to Dolly; I think it would be quite as well if she should n't see any more of him for the present, and I have just got a letter from Deborah urging me to let her go to Boston for a visit. Mother says she is getting old, now, and that she shall never see Dolly unless the child comes to her. Here 's the letter."

The doctor took it, and we, looking over his shoulder, see the large, sharp, decided style of writing characteristic of Miss Debby Kittery: —

Dear Sister, — Mother wants you to let us have Dolly to make a good, long visit. Mother is getting old now, and says she has n't seen Dolly since she has grown up, and thinks we old folks will be the better for a little young life about us. You remember Cousin Jane Davies, that married John Dunbar and went over to England? Well, brother Israel Kittery has taken a fancy to her youngest son during his late visit to England, and is going to bring him to Boston and turn over his business to him and make him his heir. We are expecting them now by every ship, and have invited them to spend the Christmas holidays with us. I understand this young Alfred Dunbar is a bright, quick-witted young slip, just graduated from Oxford, and one that finds favor in all eyes. He will help make it lively for Dolly, and if anything should come of it, why, it will be all the better. So if you will have Dolly ready to leave, I will be up to visit you in December and bring her home with me. Mother sends a great deal of love, — her rheumatism has gone to her right arm now, which is about all the variety she is treated to; but she is always serene, as usual, and sends no end of loving messages.

Your affectionate sister,

Debby.

P. S. — Don't worry about Dolly's dress. My pink brocade will cut over for her, and it is nearly as good as new. I'll bring it when I come.

On reading this letter the doctor fell into a deep muse.

"Well, what do you think?" asked his wife.

"What? Who? I?" said the doctor, with difficulty collecting himself from his reverie.

"Yes, *you*," answered his wife incisively, with just the kind of a tone to wake one out of a nap. The fact was that the good doctor had a little habit of departing uncere-

moniously into some celestial region of thought in the midst of conversation, and the notion of Dolly's going to Boston had aroused quite a train of ideas connected with certain doctrinal discussions now going on there in relation to the Socinian controversy; so that his wife's voice came to him from afar off, as one hears in a dream. To Mrs. Cushing, whose specific work lay here, and now, in the matters of this present world, this little peculiarity of her husband was at times a trifle annoying; so she added, "I do wish you would attend to what we were talking about. Don't you think it would be just the best thing in the world for Dolly to make this visit to Boston?"

"Oh, certainly I do — by all means," he said eagerly, with the air of a man just waked up who wants to show he has n't been asleep. "Yes, Dolly had better go."

The doctor mused for another moment, and then added, in a sort of soliloquy: "Boston is a city of sacred associations; it is consecrated ground; the graves of our fathers, of the saints, and the martyrs are there. I shall like little Dolly to visit them."

This was not precisely the point of view in which the visit was contemplated in the mind of his wife; but the enthusiasm was a sincere one. Boston, to all New England, was the Jerusalem — the city of sacred and religious memories; they took pleasure in her stones, and favored the dust thereof.

CHAPTER XXXIV

HIEL AND NABBY

"ONLY think, Hiel, Dolly 's going to Boston," said Nabby, when they had seated themselves cosily with the infant Zeph between them at the supper-table.

"Ye don't say so, now!" said Hiel, with the proper expression of surprise.

"Yes, Miss Kittery, her Boston aunt, 's comin' next week, and I 'm goin' in to do up her muslins for her. Yes, Dolly 's goin' to Boston."

"Good!" said Hiel. "I hope she 'll get a husband there."

"That 's jest all you men think of," answered Nabby. "Dolly ain't one o' that kind; she ain't lookin' out for fellers — though there 's plenty would be glad to have her. She ain't one o' that sort."

"Wal," said Hiel, "she 's too good lookin' to be let alone; she 'll *hev* to hev somebody."

"Oh, there 's enough after her," said Nabby. "There was that Virginny fellow in Judge Belcher's office, waitin' on her home from meetin' and wanting to be her beau; she would n't have nothin' to say to him. Then there was that Academy teacher used to walk home with her, and carry her books and go with her to singin' school; but Dolly did n't want him. And there 's Abner — he jest worships the ground she treads on; and she 's jest good friends with him. She 's good friends with 'em all round, but come to case in hand she don't want any on 'em."

"Wal, there ain't nothin' but the doctrine o' 'lection

for such gals," said Hiel. "When the one they 's decreed to marry comes along then their time comes, jest as yours and mine did, Nabby."

The conversation was here interrupted by the infant Zeph, who had improved the absorbed state of his parents' minds to carry out a plan he had been some time meditating, of upsetting the molasses pitcher. This was done with such celerity that before they could make a move both his fat hands were triumphantly spatted into the brown river, and he gave a crow of victory.

"There! clean tablecloth this very night! Did I ever see such a young un!" cried Nabby, as she caught him away from the table. "Father thinks he 's perfection. I should like to have him have the care of him once," she added, bustling and brightening and laughing as she scolded; while Hiel, making perfectly sincere but ill-directed efforts to scrape up the molasses with a spoon, succeeded only in distributing it pretty equally over the tablecloth.

"Well, now, if there ain't a pair of you!" said Nabby, when she returned to the table. "If that ain't jest like a man!"

"Wal, what would ye hev me — like a girl, or a dog, or what?" asked Hiel, as he stood, with his hands in his pockets, surveying the scene. "I did my best; but I ain't used to managing molasses and babies together; that 's a fact."

"It 's lucky mother went out to tea," said Nabby, as she whisked off the tablecloth, wiped the table, reclothed it with a clean cloth, and laid the supper dishes back in a twinkling. "Now, Hiel, we 'll try again; and be sure and put things where *he* can't get 'em; he does beat all for mischief!"

And the infant phenomenon, who had had his face washed and his apron changed in the interim, looked up

confidingly in the face of each parent and crowed out a confident laugh.

"Don't let 's tell mother," said Nabby; "she 's always sayin' we don't govern him; and I 'm sure she spoils him more than we do; but if she 'd been here she would n't get over it for a week."

In fact, the presence of Mother Jones in the family was the only drawback on Nabby's domestic felicity, that good lady's virtues, as we have seen, being much on the plaintive and elegiac order. There is, indeed, a class of elderly relatives who, their work in life being now over, have nothing to do but sit and pass criticisms on the manner in which younger pilgrims are bearing the heat and burden of the day. Although Nabby was confessedly one of the most capable and energetic of housekeepers, though everything in her domestic domains fairly shone and glittered with neatness, though her cake always rose even, though her bread was the whitest, her biscuits the lightest, and her doughnuts absolute perfection, yet Mother Jones generally sat mildly swaying in her rocking-chair and declaring herself consumed by care — and averring that she had "*everything* on her mind." "I don't *do* much, but I feel the care of everything," the old lady would remark in a quavering voice. "Young folks is so thoughtless; they don't feel care as I do."

At first Nabby was a little provoked at this state of things; but Hiel only laughed it off.

"Oh, let her talk. Mother *likes* to feel care; she wants something to worry about; she 'd be as forlorn as a hen without a nest-egg if she had n't that. Don't you trouble your head, Nabby, so long as I don't."

For all that, Nabby congratulated herself that Mother Jones was not at the tea-table, for the nurture and admonition of young Zeph was one of her most fruitful and weighty sources of care. She was always declaring that

"children was sech an awful responsibility, that she wondered that folks dared to git married!" She laid down precepts, strict even to ferocity, as to the early necessity of prompt, energetic government, and of breaking children's wills; and then gave master Zeph everything he cried for, and indulged all his whims with the most abject and prostrate submission.

"I know I had n't orter," she would say, when confronted with this patent inconsistency; "but then I ain't his mother. I ain't got the responsibility; and the fact is he will have things and I hev to let him. His parents orter break his will, but they don't; it 's a great care to me;" and Mother Jones would end by giving him the sugar-bowl to play with, and except for the immutable laws of nature she would doubtless have given him the moon or any part of the solar system that he had cried for.

Nevertheless, let it not be surmised that Mother Jones, notwithstanding the minor key in which she habitually indulged, was in the least unhappy. There are natures to whom the "unleavened bread and bitter herbs" of life are an agreeable and strengthening diet, and Mother Jones took real pleasure in everything that went to show that this earth was a vale of tears. A funeral was a most enlivening topic for her, and she never allowed an opportunity to pass within riding distance without giving it her presence, and dwelling on all the details of the state of the "corpse" and the minutiæ of the laying-out for weeks after, so that her presence at table between her blooming son and daughter answered all the moral purposes of the skeleton which the ancient Egyptians kept at their feasts. Mother Jones also, in a literal sense, "enjoyed poor health," and petted her coughs and her rheumatisms, and was particularly discomposed with any attempt to show her that she was getting better. Yet when strictly questioned the good lady always admitted, though with a mournful

shake of the head, that she had everything to be thankful for — that Hiel was a good son, and Nabby was a good daughter, and "since Hiel had jined the church and hed prayers in his family, she hoped he 'd hold on to the end — though it really worried her to see how light and triflin' he was."

In fact, Hiel, though maintaining on the whole a fairly consistent walk and profession, was undoubtedly a very gleesome church member, and about as near Mother Jones's idea of a saint as a bobolink on a clover-top. There was a worldly twinkle in his eye, and the lines of his cheery face grew rather broad than long, and his mother's most lugubrious suggestions would often set him off in a story that would upset even the old lady's gravity and bring upon her pangs of repentance. For the spiritual danger and besetting sin that Mother Jones more especially guarded against was an "undue levity;" but when she remembered that Dr. Cushing himself and all the neighboring clergymen, on an occasion of a "ministers' meeting" when she had been helping in the family, had vied with each other in telling good stories, and shaken their sides with roars of heartiest laughter, she was somewhat consoled about Hiel. She confessed it was a mystery to her, however, "how folks could hev the heart to be a-laughin' and tellin' stories in sich a dying world."

CHAPTER XXXV

MISS DEBBY ARRIVES

"To Dr. Cushing's, ma'am?"

This question met the ear of Miss Debby Kittery just after she had deposited her umbrella, with a smart, decisive thump, by her side, and settled herself and her bandbox on the back seat of the creaking, teetering old stage on the way to Poganuc.

Miss Debby opened her eyes, surveyed the questioner with a well-bred stare, and answered, with a definite air, "Yes, sir."

"Oh yis; thought so," said Hiel Jones. "Miss Kittery, I s'pose; the doctor's folks is expecting ye. Folks all well in Boston, I s'pose?"

Miss Debby in her heart thought Hiel Jones very presuming and familiar, and endeavored to convey by her behavior and manner that such was her opinion; but the effort was quite a vain one, for the remotest conception of any such possibility in his case was so far from Hiel's mind that there was not there even the material to make it of. The look of dignified astonishment with which the good lady responded to his question as to the "folks in Boston" was wholly lost on him.

The first sentence in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are "created equal," had so far become incarnate in Hiel that he never yet had seen the human being whom he did not feel competent to address on equal terms, and, when exalted to his high seat on the stage-box, could not look down upon with a species of patronage. Even

the *haute noblesse* of Poganuc allowed Hiel's familiarities and laughed at his jokes; he was one of their institutions; and what was tolerance and acceptance on the part of the aristocracy became adulation on the part of those nearer his own rank of life. And so when Miss Debby Kittery made him short answers and turned away her head, Hiel merely commented to himself, "Don't seem sociable. Poor old lady! Tired, I s'pose; roads *is* pretty rough," and gathering up his reins, dashed off cheerfully. At the first stage where he stopped to change horses he deemed it his duty to cheer the loneliness of the old lady by a little more conversation, and so, after offering to bring her a tumbler of water, he resumed: —

"Ye hain't ben to Poganuc very often, — hain't seen Dolly since she 's growed up?"

"Are you speaking of *Miss* Cushing, sir?" asked Miss Debby in tones of pointed rebuke.

"Yis — wal, we allers call her 'Dolly' t' our house," said Hiel. "We 've knowed her sence she was that high. My wife used to live to the doctor's — she thinks all the world of Dolly."

Miss Debby thought of the verse in the Church Catechism in which the catechumen defines it as his duty to "order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters." Evidently Hiel had never heard of this precept. Perhaps if he had, the inquiry as to who *are* betters, as presented to a shrewd and thoughtful mind, might lead to embarrassing results. So, as he seemed an utterly hopeless case, and as after all he appeared so bright, and anxious to oblige, Miss Debby surrendered at discretion, and during the last half of the way found herself laughing heartily at some of Hiel's stories and feeling some interest in the general summary of Poganuc news which he threw in gratis.

"Yis, the doctor's folks is all well. Doctor 's had lots

o' things sent in this year. Thanksgiving time — turkeys and chickens and eggs and lard — every kind o' thing you can think of. Everybody sent — Town Hill folks, and folks out seven miles round. Everybody likes the doctor; they 'd orter, too! There ain't sech a minister nowhere. The way he explains the doctrines and sets 'em home — I tell ye, there ain't no mistake about him; he 's a hull team, now, and our folks knows it. Orter 'a' ben here a week ago, when the doctor had his wood-spell. Tell ye, if the sleds did n't come in! Why, his back yard 's a perfect mountain o' wood — best sort, too, good oak and hickory, makes good solid coals — enough to keep him a year round. Wal, folks orter do it. He 's faithful to them, they 'd orter do wal by him."

"Is n't there an Episcopal church in your town?" asked Miss Debby.

"Oh yis, there is a little church. Squire Lewis he started it 'bout six years ago, and there was consid'able many signed off to it. But our Poganuc folks somehow ain't made for 'Piscopals. A 'Piscopal church in our town is jest like a hill o' potatoes planted under a big apple-tree; the tree got a-growin' afore they did, and don't give 'em no chance. There was my wife's father, he signed off, 'cause of a quarrel he hed with his own church; but he 's come back agin, and so have all his boys, and Nabby, and jined the doctor's church. Fact is, our folks sort o' hanker arter the old meetin'-house."

"Who is the rector of the Episcopal church?"

"Oh, that 's Sim Coan; nice, lively young feller, Sim is; but can't hold a candle to the doctor. Sim he ain't 'fraid of nobody — preaches up the 'Piscopal doctrine sharp, and stands up for his side; and he 's all the feasts and fasts and anthems and things at his tongue's end; and his folks likes him fust-rate. But the church don't grow much; jest holds its own, that 's all."

These varied items of intelligence, temporal and spiritual, were poured into Miss Debby's ear at sundry periods when horses were to be changed, or in the interval of waiting for dinner at the sleepy old country tavern; and by the time she reached Poganuc she had conceived quite a friendly feeling towards Hiel and unbent her frigid demeanor to that degree that Hiel told Nabby "the old lady reely got quite sociable and warmed up afore she got there."

Dolly was somewhat puzzled and almost alarmed on her first introduction to her aunt, who took possession of her in a summary manner, turning her round and surveying her, and giving her opinion of her with a distinct and decisive air, as if the damsel had been an article of purchase sent home to be looked over.

"So this is my niece Dolly, is it?" she said. "Well, come kiss your old aunty; upon my word, you are taller than your mother." Then holding her at arm's length and surveying her, with her head on one side, she added, "There 's a good deal of Pierrepont blood in her, sister; that is the Pierrepont nose — I should know it anywhere. Her way of carrying herself is Pierrepont. Blushing!" she added, as Dolly grew crimson under this survey; "that 's a family trick. I remember when I went to dancing-school the first time, my face was crimson as my sash. She 'll get the better of that as she gets older, as I have. Sit down by your aunty, child. I think I shall like you. That 's right, sit up straight and hold your shoulders back — the girls of this generation are getting round shouldered."

Though Dolly was somewhat confused and confounded by this abrupt mode of procedure, yet there was after all something quaint and original about her aunt's manner that amused her, and an honest sincerity in her face that won her regard. Miss Debby was one of those human beings who carry with them the apology for their own existence.

It took but a glance to see that she was one of those forces of nature which move always in straight lines, and which must be turned out for if one wishes to avoid a collision. All Miss Debby's opinions had been made up, catalogued, and arranged, at a very early period of life, and she had no thought of change. She moved in a region of certainties, and always took her own opinions for granted with a calm supremacy altogether above reason. Yet there was all the while about her a twinkle of humorous consciousness, a vein of original drollery, which gave piquancy to the brusqueness of her manner and prevented people from taking offense. So this first evening Dolly stared, laughed, blushed, wondered, had half a mind to be provoked, but ended in a hearty liking for her new relative and most agreeable anticipations of her Boston visit.

CHAPTER XXXVI

PREPARATIONS FOR SEEING LIFE

THE getting ready for Dolly's journey began to be the engrossing topic of the little household. Miss Simpkins, the Poganuc dressmaker, had a permanent corner in the sitting-room, and discoursed *ex cathedra* on "piping-cord" and "ruffling cut on the bias," and Dolly and Mrs. Cushing and Miss Deborah obediently ran up breadths, hemmed, stitched, and gathered at her word of command. The general course of society in those days as to dress and outward adornment did not run with the unchecked and impetuous current that it now does. The matter of dress has become in our day a yoke and a burden, and many a good housemother is having the springs of her existence sapped by responsibilities connected with pinking and frilling and quilling, and an army of devouring cares as to hemming, stitching, and embroidery, for which even the "consolations of religion" provide no panacea.

In the simple Puritan days, while they had before their eyes the query of Sacred Writ, "Can a maid forget her ornaments?" — they felt that there was no call to assist the maid in her meditations on this subject. Little girls were assiduously taught that to be neat and clean was the main beauty. Good mothers who had pretty daughters were very reticent of any remarks that might lead in the direction of personal vanity; any extra amount of time spent at the toilet, any apparent anxiety about individual adornment, met a persistent discouragement. Never in all her life before had Dolly heard so much discourse on sub-

jects connected with personal appearance, and, to say the truth, she did not at all enter into it with the abandon and zeal of a girl of our modern days, and found the fitting and trying on and altering rather a tribulation to be conscientiously endured. She gathered, hemmed, stitched, and sewed, however, and submitted herself to the trying-on process with resignation.

"The child don't seem to think much of dress," said Miss Debby, when alone with her sister. "What is she thinking of, with those great eyes of hers?"

"Oh, of things she is planning," said her mother; "of books she is reading, of things her father reads to her, of ways she can help me — in short, of anything but herself."

"She is very pretty," said Miss Debby, "and is sure to be very attractive."

"Yes," answered her mother, "but Dolly has n't the smallest notion of anything like coquetry. Now, she has been a good deal admired here, and there have been one or two that would evidently have been glad to go further; but Dolly cuts everything of that kind short at once. She is very pleasant, very kind, very friendly, up to a certain point, but the moment she is made love to — everything is changed."

"Well," said Miss Deborah, "I am glad I came after her. There 's everything, with a girl like Dolly, in putting her into proper society. When a girl comes to her years one should put her in the way of a suitable connection at once."

"As to that," said Mrs. Cushing, "I always felt that things of that kind must be left to Providence."

"I believe, however, your husband preaches that we must 'use the means,' does n't he? One must put children in proper society, to give Providence a chance."

"Well, Debby, you have your schemes, but I forewarn you Dolly is one who goes her own path. She seems very

sweet, very gentle, very yielding, but she has a little quiet way of her own of looking at things and deciding for herself; she always knows her own mind very definitely, too."

"Good!" said Miss Debby, taking a long and considerate pinch of snuff. "We shall see."

Miss Debby had unbounded confidence in her own powers of management. She looked upon Dolly as a very creditably educated young person so far, but did not in the least doubt her own ability to add a few finishing touches here and there, which should turn her out a perfected specimen.

On Sunday morning Miss Debby arose with the spirit of a confessor. For her brother-in-law the good lady had the sincerest respect and friendship, but on this particular day she felt bound to give her patronage and support to the little church where, in her view, the truly appointed minister dispensed the teaching of the true Church. The doctor lifted his glasses and soberly smiled as he saw her compact, energetic figure walking across the green to the little church. Dolly's cheeks flamed up; she was indignant; to her it looked like a slight upon her father; and Dolly, as we have seen, had a very active spirit of partisanship.

"Well, I must say I wonder at her doing so," she commented. "Does she not think *we* are Christians?"

"She has a right to her own faith, my child," said the doctor.

"Yes, but what would she think of me, when I am in Boston, if I should go off to some other church than hers?"

"My dear, I hope you will give her no such occasion," said Mrs. Cushing. "Your conscience requires no such course of you; hers does."

"Well, it seems to me that aunty has a very narrow and bigoted way of looking at things," said Dolly.

"Your aunt is an old lady — very decided in all her opinions — not in the least likely to be changed by anything you or I or anybody can say to her. It is best to take her as she is."

"Besides," said the doctor, "she has as much right to think I am in the wrong as I have to think she is. Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind."

. . . . . .

"I was very glad, my dear, *you* answered Dolly as you did," said Mrs. Cushing to her husband that night when they were alone. "She has such an intense feeling about all that relates to you, and the Episcopal party have been so often opposed to you, that she will need some care and caution now she is going where everything is to be changed. She will have to see that there can be truth and goodness in both forms of worship."

"Oh, certainly; I will indoctrinate Dolly," said the doctor. "Yes, I will set the whole thing before her. She has a good clear mind. I can make her understand."

CHAPTER XXXVII

LAST WORDS

At last all the preparations were made, and Dolly's modest wardrobe packed to the very last article, so that her bureau drawers looked mournfully empty. It was a little hair trunk, with "D. C." embossed in brass nails upon one end, that contained all this young lady's armor — a very different affair from the Saratoga trunks of our modern belles. The pink brocade, with its bunches of rosebuds; some tuckers of choice old lace that had figured in her mother's bridal toilet; a few bits of ribbon; a white India muslin dress, embroidered by her own hands, — these were the stock in trade of a young damsel of her times, and, strange as it may appear, young ladies then were stated by good authority to have been just as pretty and bewitching as now, when their trunks are several times as large. Dolly's place and Aunt Debby's had been properly set down on Hiel's stage-book for the next morning at six o'clock; and now remained only an evening of last words.

So Dolly sits by her father in his study, where from infancy she has retreated for pleasant quiet hours, where even the books she never read seem to her like familiar friends from the number of times she has pondered the titles upon their backs. And now, though she wants to go, and feels the fluttering eagerness of the young bird, who has wings to use and would like to try the free air, yet the first flight from the nest is a little fearful. Boston is a long way off, — three long days, — and Dolly has never

been farther from Poganuc than she has ridden by her father's side in the old chaise; so that the very journey has as much importance in her eyes as fifty years later a modern young lady will attach to a voyage to England.

"My daughter," said the doctor, "I know you will have a pleasant time; I hope, a profitable one. Your aunt is a good woman. I have great confidence in her affection for you; your own mother could not feel more sincere desire for your happiness. And your grandmother is an eminently godly woman. Of course, while with them you will attend the services of the Episcopal Church; for that you have my cordial consent and willingness. The liturgy of the Church is full of devout feelings, and the Thirty-Nine Articles (with some few slight exceptions) are a very excellent statement of truth. In adopting the spirit and language of the prayers in the service you cannot go amiss; very excellent Christians have been nourished and brought up upon them. So have no hesitation about uniting in all Christian exercises with your relatives in Boston."

"Oh, papa, I am almost sorry I am going," said Dolly impulsively. "My home has been always so happy, I feel almost afraid to leave it. It seems as if I ought not to leave you and mother alone."

The doctor smiled and stroked her hair gently in an absent way. "We shall miss you, dear child, of course; you are the last bird in the nest, but your mother and I are quite sure it is for the best."

And then the conversation wandered back over many a pleasant field of the past — over walks and talks and happy hours long gone; over the plans and hopes and wishes for her brothers that Dolly had felt proud to be old enough to share; until the good man's voice sometimes would grow husky as he spoke and Dolly's long eyelashes were wet and tearful. It was the kind of pleasant little summer rain of tears that comes so easily to young eyes that have

never known what real sorrow is. And when Dolly after her conference came to bid her mother good-night, she fell upon her neck and wept for reasons she could scarce explain herself.

"I should like to know what you 've been saying to Dolly," said Mrs. Cushing to the doctor, suddenly appearing at the study door.

"Saying to Dolly?" exclaimed the doctor, looking up dreamily, "why, nothing particular."

"Well, you 've made her cry. I declare! you men have no kind of idea how to talk to a girl."

The doctor at first looked amazed, and then an amused expression passed slowly over his face. He drew his wife down beside him, and passing his arm around her, said significantly: —

"There was a girl, once, who thought I knew how to talk to her — but that is a good many years ago."

Mrs. Cushing laughed and blushed, and said, "Oh, nonsense!"

But the doctor looked triumphant.

"As to Dolly," he said, "never fear. She 's a tender-hearted little thing, and made herself cry thinking that we should be lonesome, and a dozen other little pretty kindly things that set her tears going. She 's a precious child, and we shall miss her. I have settled her mind as to the church question."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

DOLLY'S FIRST LETTER FROM BOSTON

My dear Parents, — Here I am in Boston at last, and take the very first quiet opportunity to write to you. Hiel Jones said he would call and tell you immediately about how we got through the first day. He was very kind and attentive to us all day, taking care at every stopping-place to get the bricks heated, so that our feet were kept quite warm, and in everything he was so thoughtful and obliging that Aunt Deborah in time quite forgave him for presuming on his rights as a human being to keep up a free conversation with us at intervals, which he did with his usual cheerful good will.

It amuses me all the time to talk with aunty. All her thoughts are of a century back, and she is so unconscious and positive about them that it is really entertaining. All this talk about the "lower classes," and the dangers to be apprehended from them; of "first families" and their ways and laws and opinions; and of the impropriety of being too familiar with common people, amuses me. She seems to me like a woman in a book — one of the Old World people one reads of in Scott's novels. She is very kind to me; no mother could be kinder — but all in a sort of taking-possession way. She tells me where to sit, and what to do, and what to wear, and seems to feel a comfortable sense that she has me now all to herself. It amuses me to think how little she knows of what I really am inside.

We stopped the first night at a gloomy little tavern, and

our room was so cold that aunty and I puffed at each other like two goblins, a cloud coming out of our mouths every time we opened them. They made a fire in the chimney, but the chimney had swallows' nests in it and smoked; so we had to open our windows to let out the smoke, which did not improve matters.

The next night we slept at Worcester, and thought we would try not having a fire in our room; so it grew colder and colder all night, and in the morning we had to break the ice in our pitchers. My fingers felt like so many icicles, and my hair snapped with the electricity. But aunty kept up good cheer and made me laugh through it all with her odd sayings. She is very droll and has most original ways of taking things, and is so active and courageous nothing comes amiss to her.

Our third and last day was in a driving snowstorm, and the stage was upon runners. I could see nothing all day but white drifts and eddies of snow-feathers filling the air; but at sunset all cleared away and the sun came out just as we were coming into Boston. My heart beat quite fast when I saw the dome of the State House and thought of all the noble, good men that had lived and died for our country in that brave old city. My eyes were full of tears, but I didn't say a word to aunty, for she doesn't feel about any of these things as I do. I dare say she thinks it a great pity that the old Church and King times cannot come round again.

It was quite dark when we got home to grandmamma's, and a lovely, real home it seems to me. Dear grandmamma was so glad to see me, and she held me in her arms and cried, and said I was just my mother over again; and that pleased me, for I like to hear that I look like mother. Mamma knows just how the old parlor looks, with grandmamma's rocking-chair by the fire and her table of books by her side. The house, and everything about it,

is like a story-book, the furniture is old and dark and quaint, and the pictures on the wall are all of old-time people — aunts and cousins and uncles and grandfathers — looking down sociably at us in the flickering firelight.

It was all nice and sweet and good. By and by Uncle Israel came in, and I was introduced to him and to our new English cousin, Alfred Dunbar. They both seemed glad to see me, and we had a very cheerful, pleasant evening. Uncle Israel is a charming old gentleman, full of talk and stories of bygone times, and Cousin Alfred is not stiff and critical as Englishmen often are when they come to our country. He likes America, and says he comes here to make it his country, and so far he is delighted with all he has seen. He seems to be one of those who have the gift of seeing the best side of everything. I think it is as great a gift as any we read of in fairy stories.

Well, altogether we had a very pleasant evening, and at nine o'clock the servants came in, and grandmamma read prayers out of the great Prayer-Book by her side. It was very sweet to hear her trembling voice commending us all to God's care before we lay down to rest. Grandmamma is really altogether lovely. I feel as if it was a blessing to be in the house with her. I am so sleepy that I must leave this letter to be finished to-morrow.

December 24th.

I have not written a word to-day, because aunty said that we had come home so late that it would be all we could do to get the house trimmed for Christmas; and the minute breakfast was done there was a whole cart-load of greens discharged into the hall, and we set to work to adorn everything. I made garlands and wreaths and crosses, and all sorts of pretty things, and Cousin Alfred put them up, and aunty said that really, "for a blue Presbyterian girl," I showed wonderful skill and insight in the matter.

Cousin Alfred seemed puzzled, and asked me privately if our family were "Dissenters." I explained to him how in our country the tables were turned and it is the Episcopalians that are the dissenters; and he was quite interested and wanted to know all about it. So I told him that you could tell much better than I could, and he said he was coming some day to see his relations in the country, and inquire all about these things. He seems to be studying the facts in our country philosophically; and when I told him how I meant to visit the Copp's Hill Cemetery and the other graveyards where our fathers are buried, he said he should like to go with me. He is not at all trifling and worldly, like a great many young men, but seems to *think* a great deal and to want to know everything about the country, and I know papa would be interested to talk with him.

Between us, you 've no idea how like a bower we have made the old house look. Aunty prides herself on keeping the old English customs, and had the Yule log brought in and laid with all ceremony, and we had all the old Christmas dishes for supper in the evening, and grew very merry indeed. And indeed we have made it so late that, if I am to sleep at all to-night, I must close this letter which I want to have ready to be posted to-morrow morning.

Dear parents, I know you will be glad that I am happy and enjoying everything, but I never forget you, and think of you every moment.

Your affectionate DOLLY.

CHAPTER XXXIX

DOLLY'S SECOND LETTER

My dear Parents, — We had such a glorious Christmas morning — clear, clean white snow lying on the earth and on all, even the little branches of the trees. You know, mamma, the great square garden back of the house. Every little tree there was glittering like fairy frostwork. We all hung our stockings up the night before, and at breakfast examined our presents. I had lovely things — a beautiful Prayer-Book bound in purple velvet from grandmamma, and a charming necklace of pearls from Uncle Israel, and a scarlet cloak trimmed with lace from Aunt Deborah, and a beautiful Chinese fan from Cousin Alfred. Aunty has been putting up the usual Christmas bundle for you; so you will all share my prosperity.

I was waked in the morning by the Old North chimes, which played all sorts of psalm tunes and seemed to fill the air with beautiful thoughts. It was very sweet to me to think of what it was all about. It is not necessary to believe that our Saviour really was born this very day of all others; but that he was born on *some* day we all know. So when we walked to church together, and the church was like one green bower, and the organ played, and the choir sung, it seemed as if all there was in me was stirred. I never heard the Te Deum before, and how glorious, how wonderful it is! It took me up to the very gates of heaven. I felt as if I was hearing the angels sing; and when I thought of the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, and the holy church of Christ throughout the world, I felt

that I was one with them, and was happy to be one drop in that great ocean of joy. For though I was only a little one I felt in it, and with it, and a part of it, and all the joy and glory was mine. I trembled with happiness.

When the Communion service came I went with grandmamma and knelt at the altar. It seemed as if Christ himself was there giving me the bread and the wine. I never felt so near to Him. After church I went home. I was so full that I could not speak. No one else seemed to feel as I did — they were all used to it — but it was all new and wonderful to me, and made heavenly things so real that I felt almost averse to coming back to every-day life. I wanted to go alone to my room and dwell on it. There was quite a company invited to dinner, and I did not feel like joining them, but I knew aunty wanted me to make myself agreeable, and so I tried my best, and after a while took my part in the conversation, as gay as the rest of them. Only once in a while some of those noble words I had been hearing came back to me with a sudden thrill, and would bring tears to my eyes even while I was gayest.

Cousin Alfred noticed that I was feeling very much about something; and in the evening when we were alone for a few minutes, he asked me about it, and then I told him all how the service affected me and made me feel. He looked a little surprised at first, and then he seemed thoughtful; and when I said, "I should think those who hear and say such glorious things at church ought to live the very noblest lives, to be perfect Christians," he said, "Cousin, I am sorry to say it is not so with me. We hear these things from childhood; we hear them Sunday after Sunday, in all sorts of moods, and I 'm afraid many of us form a habit of not really thinking how much they mean. I wish I could hear our service as you have done, for the first time, and that it would seem as real and earnest to me as it does to you."

We talked a good deal after this; he has a deep, thoughtful mind, and I wish you, my dear father, could talk with him. I know you will like him. Isn't it pleasant to find relations that one can like and esteem so much? Cousin Alfred is like a brother to me already, and to-morrow we are going out to explore the antiquities of Boston. He seems as much interested in them as I do.

Dear parents, this Christmas puts me in mind of the time years ago when they dressed the little church in Poganuc, and I ran away over to the church, and got asleep under a great cedar bush, listening to the Christmas music. It affected me then just as it has done now. Is it not beautiful to think we are singing words that Christians have been singing for more than a thousand years! It gives you the feeling of being in a great army — one of a great host; and for a poor little insignificant thing like me it is a joyful feeling.

You ought to see how delighted Aunt Deborah is that I take so kindly to the Prayer-Book and the service. She gives me little approving nods now and then, and taps me on the shoulder in a patronizing way and says there is good blood in my veins, for all I was brought up a Presbyterian! This is all very well; but when she goes to unchurching all our churches and saying there are no ordained ministers in the United States except the few in Episcopal pulpits, I am dreadfully tempted to run a tilt with her, though I know it would do no earthly good. I believe I should do it, however, if Cousin Alfred did not take up the argument on our side, and combat her so much better than I could that I am content to let her alone. She tells him that he is no Englishman and no Churchman, but a very radical; and he tells her that he came to America to learn to use his common sense and get rid of old rubbish!

For all this they are excellent friends, and dear old grandmamma always takes our part because she is so afraid

Aunt Debby will hurt my feelings, though aunty says that in her heart grandmamma is a regular old Tory.

I asked grandma about this one day, when we were alone, and she said she always loved and honored the king and royal family, and was grieved when they stopped praying for them in the churches. If she was a Tory she was so from love, and it is quite charming to hear her talk about the old times. It seems to me no great change ever comes on this earth without grieving some good people.

But it is past midnight and I must not sit up writing any longer. Dear parents, I wish you a happy Christmas!

Your loving DOLLY.

CHAPTER XL

ALFRED DUNBAR TO EUGENE SINCLAIR

Dear old Fellow, — Here I am in America, — in Boston, — and every day I spend here makes me more and more satisfied with my change of situation. The very air here is free and inspiring, full of new hope and life. The Old World with all its restraints and bounds, its musty prejudices, its time-honored inconveniences and hindrances, is a thing gone by; it is blue in the dim distance, and I see before me a free, generous, noble country that offers everything equally to all. I like Massachusetts; I like Boston; and more and more I feel that I am a fortunate fellow to have been selected by my uncle for this lot.

He is all that is kind and generous and fatherly to me, and I should be an ungrateful cur if I did not give him the devotion of a son. He is so amiable and reasonable that this is not at all a hard task.

We are spending our Christmas holidays with his mother and sister; after that he will go to housekeeping in his own house. He wants me to get married with all convenient dispatch, but I am one that cannot enter into the holy state simply to furnish a housekeeper to my uncle or to place a well-dressed, well-mannered woman at the head of my own table.

You at home called me fastidious and romantic. Well, I am so to this degree, that I never shall marry unless I see the woman I cannot live without. The feast of matrimony may be well appointed, the oxen and fatlings be killed, and all things ready, but I never shall accept unless

some divine power *compels* me to come in, — and up to this day I have felt no such call.

Mark me, I say, *up to this day;* for I am by no means certain I shall say as much a month hence. To be frank with you, there is spending the Christmas holidays under the same roof with me a very charming girl whom I am instructed by my Aunt Deborah to call "Cousin Dolly."

Now, in point of fact, this assumption of relationship is the most transparent moonshine. I am, I believe, second or third cousin to my "Uncle Israel," who is real uncle to this Miss Dolly. Of course my cousinship to her must be of a still more remote and impalpable nature; but if it is agreed that we call each other "cousin," certainly it is not *I* that am going to object to the position and its immunities — oh no! A cousin stands on a vantage-ground; all sorts of delightful freedoms and privileges are permitted to him!

I "take the good the gods provide" me, and so Cousin Dolly and I have become the best of friends, and we have been busy making wreaths and crosses and Christmas decorations under the superintendence of Aunt Deborah, in the most edifying and amicable way. This Aunt Deborah is the conventional upright, downright, good, opinionated, honest, sincere old Englishwoman, of whom there are dozens at every turn in the old country, but who here in America have the interest that appertains to the relics of a past age. But she is vigorously determined that in her domains the old customs shall be in full force, and every rule of Christmas-keeping observed.

Of course I put up mistletoe in all the proper places, and I found my new cousin, having grown up as a New England Congregational minister's daughter, knew nothing of its peculiar privileges and peculiarities, so that when the kissing began I saw a bright flush of amazement and almost resentment pass over her face; though when it was ex-

plained to be an old Christmas custom she laughed and gave way with a good grace. But I observed my young lady warily inspecting the trimmings of the room, and quietly avoiding all the little green traps thereafter.

It is quite evident that, though she has all the gentleness of a dove, she has some of the wisdom of the serpent, and possesses very definite opinions as to what she likes and does not like. She impresses me as having, behind an air of softness and timidity, a very positive and decided character. There is a sort of reserved force in her; and one must study her to become fully acquainted with her. Thus far I hope I have not lost ground.

I find she is an enthusiast for her country, for her religion, for everything high and noble; and not one of the mere dolls that have no capability for anything but ribbons and laces. She has promised to show me the antiquities of Boston and put me in the way of knowing all that a good American ought to know; you see, our time for the holidays is very agreeably planned out in advance.

And now, my dear old fellow, I see you shake your head and say, What is to come of all this? Wait and see. If it should so happen that I should succeed in pleasing this little American princess — if, having gained her ear as cousin, I should succeed in proving to her that I am no cousin at all, but want to be more than cousin or brother or the whole world together to her — if all this should come to pass, why — there have stranger things happened in this world of ours.

But I am running before my time. Miss Dolly is yet an unknown quantity and there may be a long algebraic problem to be done before I can know what may be; and so, good-night for the present.

Yours ever truly, ALFRED DUNBAR.

CHAPTER XLI

FINALE

After reading the preceding letters, there is no one who has cared to follow Dolly's fortunes thus far that is not ready to declare the end of the story. One sees how the Christmas holidays stretched on and on; how aunt and grandmamma importuned Dolly to stay longer; how Dolly stayed, and how she and Cousin Alfred walked and talked and studied New England history, and visited all the shrines in Boston and Cambridge and the region round about; how Aunt Debby plumed herself on the interesting state of things evidently growing up, but wisely said nothing to either party; how at last when spring came, and April brought back the Mayflower buds, and Dolly felt that she could stay no longer but must go home to her parents, "Cousin Alfred" declared that he could not think of her taking a three days' journey alone, that he must go with her and protect her, and improve the opportunity to make the acquaintance of his relations in the country.

All this came to pass, and one fine evening, just at sunset, Hiel drove into Poganuc in glory, and deposited Dolly and her little hair trunk and her handsome attendant at the parsonage door. There was a bluebird singing on the top of the tall buttonwood-tree opposite, just as he used to sing years before; and as to Hiel, he returned home even better content with himself than ordinarily.

"There now, Nabby! did n't I tell ye what would happen when Dolly went to Boston? Wal, I 've just set her down to the doctor's with as fine a young sprig as you 'd

wish to see, who came all the way from Boston with her. I tell you, that 'ere young man's eyes is sot; he knows what he 's come to Poganuc fer, ef no one else don't."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Nabby and Mother Jones, both rushing to the window simultaneously with the vain hope of getting a glimpse.

"Oh, there 's no use lookin'!" said Hiel; "they 're gone in long ago. Dr. and Mis' Cushing was standin' in the doorway when I come up, and mighty glad they was to see her, and him too, and shook hands with him. Oh, thet 'ere 's a fixed-up thing, you may depend."

"Dear me, what is he?" queried Mother Jones. "Do you know, Hiel?"

"Of course I know," said Hiel; "he 's a merchant in the Injy trade up there to Boston. I expect he makes lots o' money."

"Dear me! I hope they won't set their hearts on worldly prosperity," said Mother Jones in a lugubrious tone; "this 'ere 's a dyin' world."

"For all that, mother," said Hiel, as they sat down to the tea-table, "you enjoy a cup o' hot tea as well as any woman livin', and why should n't the parson's folks be glad o' their good things?"

"Wal, I don' know," answered Mother Jones, "but it allers kind o' scares me when everything seems to be goin' jest right fer folks. Ye know the hymn says: —

> 'We should suspect some danger nigh
> When we possess delight.'

I remember poor Bill Parmerlee fell down dead the very week he was married!"

"Well, Nabby and I neither of us fell down dead when *we* was married," said Hiel, "and nobody else that ever I heerd on, so we won't weep and wail if Dolly Cushing *hez* got a rich, handsome feller, and is goin' to live in Boston."

But, after all, Dolly and Alfred Dunbar were not yet engaged. No decisive word had been spoken between them; though it seemed now as if but a word were wanting. It was after a week of happy visiting, when he had made himself most charming to all in the house, when Dolly and he had together explored every walk and glen and waterfall around Poganuc, that at last the young man found voice to ask the doctor for what he wanted, and, armed with the parental approval, to put the decisive question to Dolly. Her answer is not set down. But it is on record that in the month of June there was a wedding at Poganuc which furnished the town with things to talk about for weeks.

It was a radiant June morning, when the elms of Poganuc were all alive with birds, when the daisies were white in the meadows, and the bobolink on the apple-tree was outdoing himself, that Hiel drove up to the door of the parsonage to take Dolly and her husband their first day's journey towards their new home. There were the usual smiles and tears and kissing and crying, and then Hiel shut the stage-door, mounted his box, and drove away in triumph. It was noticed that he had ornamented his horses with a sprig of lilac blossoms over each ear, and wore a great bouquet in his buttonhole.

And so our Dolly goes to her new life, and, save in memories of her childhood, is to be no longer one of the good people of Poganuc.

. . . . . .

Years have passed since then. Dolly has held her place among the matronage of Boston; her sons have graduated at Harvard, and her daughters have recalled to memory the bright eyes and youthful bloom of their mother.

As to Poganuc, all whom we knew there have passed away; all the Town Hill aristocracy and the laboring farmers of the outskirts have gone, one by one, to the

peaceful sleep of the Poganuc graveyard. There were laid the powdered head, stately form, and keen blue eye of Colonel Davenport; there came in time the once active brain and ready tongue of Judge Belcher; there, the bright eyes and genial smile of Judge Gridley; there, the stalwart form of Tim Hawkins, the gray, worn frame of Zeph Higgins. Even Hiel's cheery face and vigorous arm had their time of waxing old and passing away, and were borne in to lie quiet under the daisies. The pastor and his wife sleep there peacefully with their folded flock around them.

> "Kinsman and townsman are laid side by side,
> Yet none have saluted, and none have replied."

A village of white stones stands the only witness of the persons of our story. Even the old meeting-house is dissolved and gone.

Generation passeth, generation cometh, saith the wise man, but the earth abideth forever. The hills of Poganuc are still beautiful in their summer woodland dress. The Poganuc River still winds at their feet with gentle murmur. The lake, in its steel-blue girdle of pines, still reflects the heavens as a mirror; its silent forest shores are full of life and wooded beauty. The elms that overarch the streets of the central village have spread their branches wider, and form a beautiful walk where other feet than those we wot of are treading. As other daisies have sprung in the meadows, and other bobolinks and bluebirds sing in the treetops, so other men and women have replaced those here written of, and the story of life still goes on from day to day among the POGANUC PEOPLE.

PINK AND WHITE TYRANNY

CHAPTER I

FALLING IN LOVE

"WHO is that beautiful creature?" said John Seymour, as a light, sylphlike form tripped up the steps of the veranda of the hotel where he was lounging away his summer vacation.

"That! Why, don't you know, man? That is the celebrated, the divine Lillie Ellis, the most adroit 'fisher of men' that has been seen in our days."

"By George, but she's pretty, though!" said John, following with enchanted eyes the distant motions of the sylphide.

The vision that he saw was of a delicate little fairy form; a complexion of pearly white, with a cheek of the hue of a pink shell; a fair, sweet, infantine face surrounded by a fleecy radiance of soft golden hair. The vision appeared to float in some white gauzy robes; and when she spoke or smiled, what an innocent, fresh, untouched, unspoiled look there was upon the face! John gazed, and thought of all sorts of poetical similes: of a "daisy just wet with morning dew;" of a "violet by a mossy stone;" in short, of all the things that poets have made and provided for the use of young gentlemen in the way of falling in love.

This John Seymour was about as good and honest a man

as there is going in this world of ours. He was a generous, just, manly, religious young fellow. He was heir to a large, solid property; he was a well-read lawyer, established in a flourishing business; he was a man that all the world spoke well of, and had cause to speak well of. The only duty to society which John had left as yet unperformed was that of matrimony. Three-and-thirty years had passed; and with every advantage for supporting a wife, with a charming home all ready for a mistress, John, as yet, had not proposed to be the defender and provider for any of the more helpless portion of creation. The cause of this was, in the first place, that John was very happy in the society of a sister, a little older than himself, who managed his house admirably, and was a charming companion to his leisure hours; and, in the second place, that he had a secret, bashful self-depreciation in regard to his power of pleasing women, which made him ill at ease in their society. Not that he did not mean to marry. He certainly did. But the fair being that he was to marry was a distant ideal, a certain undefined and cloudlike creature; and up to this time he had been waiting to meet her, without taking any definite steps towards that end. To say the truth, John Seymour, like many other outwardly solid, sober-minded, respectable citizens, had deep within himself a little private bit of romance. He could not utter it, he never talked it; he would have blushed and stammered and stuttered woefully, and made a very poor figure, in trying to tell any one about it; but nevertheless it was there, a secluded chamber of imagery, and the future Mrs. John Seymour formed its principal ornament.

The wife that John had imaged, his dream-wife, was not at all like his sister; though he loved his sister heartily, and thought her one of the best and noblest women that could possibly be. But his sister was all plain prose, — good, strong, earnest, respectable prose, it is true, but

yet prose. He could read English history with her, talk accounts and business with her, discuss politics with her, and valued her opinions on all these topics as much as that of any man of his acquaintance. But with the visionary Mrs. John Seymour aforesaid he never seemed to himself to be either reading history, or settling accounts, or talking politics; he was off with her in some sort of enchanted cloudland of happiness, where she was all to him, and he to her, — a sort of rapture of protective love on one side, and of confiding devotion on the other, quite inexpressible, and that John would not have talked of for the world.

So when he saw this distant vision of airy gauzes, of pearly whiteness, of sea-shell pink, of infantine smiles, and waving, golden curls, he stood up with a shy desire to approach the wonderful creature, and yet with a sort of embarrassed feeling of being very awkward and clumsy. He felt, somehow, as if he were a great, coarse behemoth; his arms seemed to him awkward appendages; his hands suddenly appeared to him rough, and his fingers swelled and stumpy. When he thought of asking an introduction, he felt himself growing very hot, and blushing to the roots of his hair.

"Want to be introduced to her Seymour?" said Carryl Ethridge. "I 'll trot you up. I know her."

"No, thank you," said John stiffly. In his heart he felt an absurd anger at Carryl for the easy, assured way in which he spoke of the sacred creature who seemed to him something too divine to be lightly talked of. And then he saw Carryl marching up to her with his air of easy assurance. He saw the bewitching smile come over that fair, flowery face; he saw Carryl, with unabashed familiarity, take her fan out of her hand, look at it as if it were a mere common, earthly fan, toss it about, and pretend to fan himself with it.

"I did n't know he was such a puppy!" said John to

himself, as he stood in a sort of angry bashfulness, envying the man that was so familiar with that loveliness. Ah! John, John! You would n't, for the world, have told to man or woman what a fool you were at that moment. "What a fool I am!" was his mental commentary; "just as if it was anything to me." And he turned and walked to the other end of the veranda.

"I think you 've hooked another fish, Lillie," said Belle Trevors in the ear of the little divinity.

"Who?"

"Why! that Seymour there, at the end of the veranda. He is looking at you, do you know? He is rich, very rich, and of an old family. Did n't you see how he started and looked after you when you came up on the veranda?"

"Oh! I saw plain enough," said the divinity, with one of her unconscious, babylike smiles.

"What are you ladies talking?" said Carryl Ethridge.

"Oh, secrets!" said Belle Trevors. "You are very presuming, sir, to inquire."

"Mr. Ethridge," said Lillie Ellis, "don't you think it would be nice to promenade?"

This was said with such a pretty coolness, such a quiet composure, as showed Miss Lillie to be quite mistress of the situation; there was, of course, no sort of design in it.

Ethridge offered his arm at once; and the two sauntered to the end of the veranda, where John Seymour was standing. The blood rushed in hot currents over him, and he could hear the beating of his heart; he felt somehow as if the hour of his fate was coming. He had a wild desire to retreat, and put it off. He looked over the end of the veranda, with some vague idea of leaping it; but alas, it was ten feet above ground, and a lover's leap would have only ticketed him as out of his head. There was nothing for it but to meet his destiny like a man.

Carryl came up with the lady on his arm; and as he

stood there for a moment, in the coolest, most indifferent tone in the world, said, "Oh! by the bye, Miss Ellis, let me present my friend Mr. Seymour."

The die was cast. John's face burned like fire; he muttered something about "being happy to make Miss Ellis's acquaintance," looking all the time as if he would be glad to jump over the railing, or take wings and fly, to get rid of the happiness.

Miss Ellis was a belle by profession, and she understood her business perfectly. In nothing did she show herself master of her craft more than in the adroitness with which she could soothe the bashful pangs of new votaries, and place them on an easy footing with her. "Mr. Seymour," she said affably, "to tell the truth, I have been desirous of the honor of your acquaintance ever since I saw you in the breakfast-room this morning."

"I am sure I am very much flattered," said John, his heart beating thick and fast. "May I ask why you honor me with such a wish?"

"Well, to tell the truth, because you strikingly resemble a very dear friend of mine," said Miss Ellis, with her sweet, unconscious simplicity of manner.

"I am still more flattered," said John, with a quicker beating of the heart; "only I fear that you may find me an unpleasant contrast."

"Oh! I think not," said Lillie, with another smile; "we shall soon be good friends, too, I trust."

"I trust so certainly," said John earnestly.

Belle Trevors now joined the party; and the four were soon chatting together on the best footing of acquaintance. John was delighted to feel himself already on easy terms with the fair vision.

"You have not been here long?" said Lillie to John.

"No, I have only just arrived."

"And you were never here before?"

"No, Miss Ellis, I am entirely new to the place."

"I am an old *habituée* here," said Lillie, "and can recommend myself as authority on all points connected with it."

"Then," said John, "I hope you will take me under your tuition."

"Certainly, free of charge," she said, with another ravishing smile. "You have n't seen the boiling spring yet?" she added.

"No, I have n't seen anything yet."

"Well, then, if you 'll give me your arm across the lawn, I 'll show it to you."

All of this was done in the easiest, most matter-of-course manner in the world; and off they started, John in a flutter of flattered delight at the gracious acceptance accorded to him.

Ethridge and Belle Trevors looked after them with a nod of intelligence at each other.

"Hooked, by George!" said Ethridge.

"Well, it 'll be a good thing for Lillie, won't it?"

"For her? Oh yes, a capital thing for her!"

"Well, for him too."

"Well, I don't know. John is a pretty nice fellow; a very nice fellow, besides being rich, and all that; and Lillie is somewhat shop-worn by this time. Let me see: she must be seven-and-twenty."

"Oh, yes, she 's all that!" said Belle, with ingenuous ardor. "Why, she was in society while I was a schoolgirl! Yes, dear Lillie is certainly twenty-seven, if not more; but she keeps her freshness wonderfully."

"Well, she looks fresh enough, I suppose, to a good, honest, artless fellow like John Seymour, who knows as little of the world as a milkmaid. John is a great, innocent, country steer, fed on clover and dew, and as honest and ignorant of all sorts of naughty, wicked things as his

mother or sister. He takes Lillie in a sacred simplicity quite refreshing; but to me Lillie is played out. I know her like a book. I know all her smiles and wiles, advices and devices; and her system of tactics is an old story with me. I sha'n't interrupt any of her little games. Let her have her little field all to herself; it 's time she was married, to be sure."

Meanwhile, John was being charmingly ciceroned by Lillie, and scarcely knew whether he was in the body or out. All that he felt, and felt with a sort of wonder, was that he seemed to be acceptable and pleasing in the eyes of this little fairy, and that she was leading him into wonderland. They went not only to the boiling spring, but up and down so many wild woodland paths that had been cut for the adornment of the Carmel Springs; and so well pleased were both parties, that it was supper-time before they reappeared on the lawn; and when they did appear, Lillie was leaning confidentially on John's arm, with a wreath of woodbine in her hair that he had arranged there, wondering all the while at his own wonderful boldness, and at the grace of the fair entertainer.

The returning couple were seen from the windows of Mrs. Chit, who sat on the lookout for useful information; and who forthwith ran to the apartments of Mrs. Chat, and told her to look out at them. Billy This, who was smoking his cigar on the veranda, immediately ran and called Harry That to look at them, and laid a bet at once that Lillie had "hooked" Seymour.

"She 'll have him, by George, she will!"

"Oh, pshaw! she is always hooking fellows, but you see she don't get married," said matter-of-fact Harry. "It won't come to anything, now, I 'll bet. Everybody said she was engaged to Danforth, but it all ended in smoke."

Whether it would be an engagement, or would all end in smoke, was the talk of Carmel Springs for the next two

weeks. At the end of that time the mind of Carmel Springs was relieved by the announcement that it was an engagement. The important deciding announcement was first authentically made by Lillie to Belle Trevors, who had been invited into her room that night for the purpose.

"Well, Belle, it 's all over. He spoke out to-night."

"He offered himself!"

"Certainly."

"And you took him?"

"Of course I did; I should be a fool not to."

"Oh, so I think, decidedly!" said Belle, kissing her friend in a rapture. "You dear creature! how nice! it 's splendid!"

Lillie took the embrace with her usual sweet composure, and turned to her looking-glass, and began taking down her hair for the night. It will be perceived that this young lady was not overcome with emotion, but was in a perfectly collected state of mind.

"He 's a little bald, and getting rather stout," she said reflectively, "but he 'll do."

"I never saw a creature so dead in love as he is," said Belle.

A quiet smile passed over the soft, peachblow cheeks as Lillie answered, "Oh, dear, yes! He perfectly worships the ground I tread on."

"Lil, you fortunate creature, you! Positively, it 's the best match that there has been about here this summer. He 's rich, of an old, respectable family; and then he has good principles, you know, and all that," said Belle.

"I think he 's nice myself," said Lillie, as she stood brushing out a golden tangle of curls. "Dear me!" she added, "how much better he is than that Danforth! Really, Danforth was a little too horrid; his teeth were dreadful. Do you know, I should have had something of

a struggle to take him, though he was so terribly rich? Then Danforth had been horridly dissipated, — you don't know, — Maria Sanford told me such shocking things about him, and she knows they are true. Now, I don't think John has ever been dissipated."

"Oh no!" said Belle. "I heard all about him. He joined the church when he was only twenty, and has been always spoken of as a perfect model. I only think you may find it a little slow, living in Springdale. He has a fine, large, old-fashioned house there, and his sister is a very nice woman; but they are a sort of respectable, retired set, — never go into fashionable company."

"Oh, I don't mind it!" said Lillie. "I shall have things my own way, I know. One is n't obliged to live in Springdale, nor with poky old sisters, you know; and John will do just as I say, and live where I please."

She said this with her simple, soft air of perfect assurance, twisting her shower of bright, golden curls; with her gentle, childlike face, and soft, beseeching blue eyes, and dimpling little mouth, looking back on her, out of the mirror. By these the little queen had always ruled from her cradle, and should she not rule now? Was it any wonder that John was half out of his wits with joy at thought of possessing *her?* Simply and honestly, she thought not. He was to be congratulated; though it was n't a bad thing for her, either.

"Belle," said Lillie, after an interval of reflection, "I won't be married in white satin, — that I 'm resolved on. Now," she said, facing round with increasing earnestness, "there have been five weddings in our set, and all the girls have been married in just the same dress, — white satin and point lace, white satin and point lace, over and over, till I 'm tired of it. I 'm determined I 'll have something new."

"Well, I would, I 'm sure," said Belle. "Say white

tulle, for instance; you know you are so petite and fairy-like."

"No; I shall write out to Madame La Roche, and tell her she must get up something wholly original. I shall send for my whole trousseau. Papa will be glad enough to come down, since he gets me off his hands, and no more fuss about bills, you know. Do you know, Belle, that creature is just wild about me; he 'd like to ransack all the jewelers' shops in New York for me. He 's going up to-morrow, just to choose the engagement ring. He says he can't trust to an order; that he must go and choose one worthy of me."

"Oh! it 's plain enough that that game is all in your hands, as to him, Lillie; but, Lil, what will your Cousin Harry say to all this?"

"Well, of course he won't like it; but I can't help it if he don't. Harry ought to know that it 's all nonsense for him and me to think of marrying. He does know it."

"To tell the truth, I always thought, Lil, you were more in love with Harry than with anybody you ever knew."

Lillie laughed a little, and then the prettiest sweet-pea flush deepened the pink of her cheeks. "To say the truth, Belle, I could have been if he had been in circumstances to marry. But, you see, I am one of those to whom the luxuries are essential. I never could rub and scrub and work; in fact, I had rather not live at all than live poor; and Harry is poor, and he always will be poor. It 's a pity, too, poor fellow, for he 's nice. Well, he is off in India! I know he will be tragical and gloomy, and all that," she said; and then the soft child-face smiled to itself in the glass, — such a pretty little innocent smile!

All this while John sat up with his heart beating very fast, writing all about his engagement to his sister, and, up to this point, his nearest, dearest, most confidential

friend. It is almost too bad to copy the letter of a shy man who finds himself in love for the first time in his life, but we venture to make an extract: —

It is not her beauty merely that drew me to her, though she is the most beautiful human being I ever saw; it is the exquisite feminine softness and delicacy of her character, that sympathetic pliability by which she adapts herself to every varying feeling of the heart. You, my dear sister, are the noblest of women, and your place in my heart is still what it always was; but I feel that this dear little creature, while she fills a place no other has ever entered, will yet be a new bond to unite us. She will love us both; she will gradually come into all our ways and opinions, and be insensibly formed by us into a noble womanhood. Her extreme beauty and the great admiration that has always followed her have exposed her to many temptations, and caused most ungenerous things to be said of her.

Hitherto she has lived only in the fashionable world; and her literary and domestic education, as she herself is sensible, has been somewhat neglected. But she longs to retire from all this; she is sick of fashionable folly, and will come to us to be all our own. Gradually the charming circle of cultivated families which form our society will elevate her taste and form her mind.

Love is woman's inspiration, and love will lead her to all that is noble and good. My dear sister, think not that any new ties are going to make you any less to me, or touch your place in my heart. I have already spoken of you to Lillie, and she longs to know you. You must be to her what you have always been to me, — guide, philosopher, and friend.

I am sure I never felt better impulses, more humble, more thankful, more religious, than I do now. That the

happiness of this soft, gentle, fragile creature is to be henceforth in my hands is to me a solemn and inspiring thought. What man is worthy of a refined, delicate woman? I feel my unworthiness of her every hour; but, so help me God, I shall try to be all to her that a husband should; and you, my sister, I know, will help me to make happy the future which she so confidingly trusts to me.

Believe me, dear sister, I never was so much your affectionate brother, JOHN SEYMOUR.

P. S. — I forgot to tell you that Lillie remarkably resembles the ivory miniature of our dear sainted mother. She was very much affected when I told her of it. I think naturally Lillie has very much such a character as our mother; though circumstances, in her case, have been unfavorable to the development of it.

Whether the charming vision was realized, whether the little sovereign now enthroned will be a just and clement one, what immunities and privileges she will allow to her slaves, — is yet to be seen in this story.

CHAPTER II

WHAT SHE THINKS OF IT

SPRINGDALE was one of those beautiful rural towns whose flourishing aspect is a striking exponent of the peculiarities of New England life. The ride through it presents a refreshing picture of wide, cool, grassy streets, overhung with green arches of elm, with rows of large, handsome houses on either side, each standing back from the street in its own retired square of garden, green turf, shady trees, and flowering shrubs. It was, so to speak, a little city of country-seats. It spoke of wealth, thrift, leisure, cultivation, quiet, thoughtful habits, and moral tastes.

Some of these mansions were of ancestral reputation, and had been in the family whose name they bore for generations back; a circumstance sometimes occurring even in New England towns where neither law nor custom unites to perpetuate property in certain family lines. The Seymour house was a well-known respected mansion for generations back. Old Judge Seymour, the grandfather, was the lineal descendant of Parson Seymour, the pastor who first came with the little colony of Springdale, when it was founded as a church in the wilderness, amid all the dangers of wild beasts and Indians. This present Seymour mansion was founded on the spot where the house of the first minister was built by the active hands of his parishioners; and from generation to generation, order, piety, education, and high respectability had been the tradition of the place.

The reader will come in with us, on this bright June morning, through the grassy front yard, which has only the usual New England fault of being too densely shaded. The house we enter has a wide, cool hall running through its centre and out into a back garden, now all aglow with every beauty of June. The broad alleys of the garden showed bright stores of all sorts of good old-fashioned flowers, well tended and kept. Clumps of stately hollyhocks and scarlet peonies; roses of every hue, purple, blush, gold-color, and white, were showering down their leaves on the grassy turf; honeysuckles climbed and clambered over arbors; and great, stately tufts of virgin-white lilies exalted their majestic heads in saintly magnificence. The garden was Miss Grace Seymour's delight and pride. Every root in it was fragrant with the invisible blossoms of memory, — memories of the mother who loved and planted and watched them before her, and the grandmother who had cared for them before that. The spirit of these charming old-fashioned gardens is the spirit of family love; and if ever blessed souls from their better home feel drawn back to anything on earth, we think it must be to their flower gardens.

Miss Grace had been up early, and now, with her garden hat on, and scissors in hand, was coming up the steps with her white apron full of roses, white lilies, meadowsweets, and honeysuckle, for the parlor vases, when the servant handed her a letter.

"From John," she said, "good fellow;" and then she laid it on the mantel-shelf of the parlor, while she busied herself in arranging her flowers. "I must get these into water, or they will wilt," she said.

The large parlor was like many that you and I have seen in a certain respectable class of houses, — wide, cool, shady, and with a mellow *old* tone to everything in its furniture and belongings. It was a parlor of the past, and

not of to-day, yet exquisitely neat and well kept. The Turkey carpet was faded; it had been part of the wedding furnishing of Grace's mother, years ago. The great, wide, motherly, chintz-covered sofa, which filled a recess commanding the window, was as different as possible from any smart modern article of the name. The heavy, claw-footed, mahogany chairs; the tall clock that ticked in one corner; the footstools and ottomans in faded embroidery, — all spoke of days past. So did the portraits on the wall. One was of a fair, rosy young girl, in a white gown, with powdered hair dressed high over a cushion. It was the portrait of Grace's mother. Another was that of a minister in gown and bands, with black-silk-gloved hands holding up conspicuously a large Bible. This was the remote ancestor, the minister. Then there was the picture of John's father, placed lovingly where the eyes seemed always to be following the slight, white-robed figure of the young wife. The walls were papered with an old-fashioned paper of a peculiar pattern, bought in France seventy-five years before. The vases of India china that adorned the mantels, the framed engravings of architecture and pictures in Rome, — all were memorials of the taste of those long passed away. Yet the room had a fresh, sweet, sociable air. The roses and honeysuckles looked in at the windows; the table covered with books and magazines, and the familiar work-basket of Miss Grace, with its work, gave a sort of impression of modern family household life. It was a wide, open, hospitable, generous-minded room, that seemed to breathe a fragrance of invitation and general sociability; it was a room full of associations and memories, and its daily arrangement and ornamentation made one of the pleasant tasks of Miss Grace's life.

She spread down a newspaper on the large, square centre table, and emptying her apronful of flowers upon it,

took her vases from the shelf, and with her scissors sat down to the task of clipping and arranging them.

Just then Letitia Ferguson came across the garden, and entered the back door after her, with a knot of choice roses in her hand, and a plate of seed-cakes covered with a hem-stitched napkin. The Fergusons and the Seymours occupied adjoining houses, and were on footing of the most perfect undress intimacy. They crossed each other's gardens, and came without knocking into each other's doors twenty times a day, apropos to any bit of chit-chat that they might have, a question to ask, a passage in a book to show, a household receipt that they had been trying. Letitia was the most intimate and confidential friend of Grace. In fact, the whole Ferguson family seemed like another portion of the Seymour family. There were two daughters, of whom Letitia was the eldest. Then came the younger Rose, a nice, charming, well-informed, good girl, always cheerful and chatty, and with a decent share of ability at talking lively nonsense. The brothers of the family, like the young men of New England country towns generally, were off in the world seeking their fortunes. Old Judge Ferguson was a gentleman of the old school, — formal, stately, polite, always complimentary to ladies, and with a pleasant little budget of old-gentlemanly hobbies and prejudices, which it afforded him the greatest pleasure to air in the society of his friends. Old Mrs. Ferguson was a pattern of motherliness, with her quaint, old-fashioned dress, her elaborate caps, her daily and minute inquiries after the health of all her acquaintances, and the tender pityingness of her nature for everything that lived and breathed in this world of sin and sorrow.

Letitia and Grace, as two older sisters of families, had a peculiar intimacy, and discussed everything together, from the mode of clearing jelly up to the profoundest problems of science and morals. They were both charming, well-

mannered, well-educated, well-read women, and trusted each other to the uttermost with every thought and feeling and purpose of their hearts.

As we have said, Letitia Ferguson came in at the back door without knocking, and coming softly behind Miss Grace, laid down her bunch of roses among the flowers, and then set down her plate of seed-cakes. Then she said, "I brought you some specimens of my Souvenir de Malmaison bush, and my first trial of your receipt."

"Oh, thanks!" said Miss Grace; "how charming those roses are! It was too bad to spoil your bush, though."

"No; it does it good to cut them; it will flower all the more. But try one of those cakes, — are they right?"

"Excellent! you have hit it exactly," said Grace; "exactly the right proportion of seeds. I was hurrying," she added, "to get these flowers in water, because a letter from John is waiting to be read."

"A letter! How nice!" said Miss Letitia, looking towards the shelf. "John is as faithful in writing as if he were your lover."

"He is the best lover a woman can have," said Grace, as she busily sorted and arranged the flowers. "For my part, I ask nothing better than John."

"Let me arrange for you, while you read your letter," said Letitia, taking the flowers from her friend's hands.

Miss Grace took down the letter from the mantelpiece, opened, and began to read it. Miss Letitia, meanwhile, watched her face, as we often carelessly watch the face of a person reading a letter. Miss Grace was not technically handsome, but she had an interesting, kindly, sincere face; and her friend saw gradually a dark cloud rising over it, as one watches a shadow on a field. When she had finished the letter, with a sudden movement she laid her head forward on the table among the flowers, and covered her face with her hands. She seemed not to remember that any one was present.

Letitia came up to her, and laying her hand gently on hers, said, "What is it, dear?"

Miss Grace lifted her head, and said in a husky voice, "Nothing, only it is so sudden! John is engaged!"

"Engaged! to whom?"

"To Lillie Ellis."

"John engaged to Lillie Ellis?" said Miss Ferguson in a tone of shocked astonishment.

"So he writes me. He is completely infatuated by her."

"How very sudden!" said Miss Letitia. "Who could have expected it? Lillie Ellis is so entirely out of the line of any of the women he has ever known."

"That 's precisely what 's the matter," said Miss Grace. "John knows nothing of any but good, noble women; and he thinks he sees all this in Lillie Ellis."

"There 's nothing to her but her wonderful complexion," said Miss Ferguson, "and her pretty little coaxing ways; but she is the most utterly selfish, heartless little creature that ever breathed."

"Well, she is to be John's wife," said Miss Grace, sweeping the remainder of the flowers into her apron; "and so ends my life with John. I might have known it would come to this. I must make arrangements at once for another house and home. This house, so much, so dear to me, will be nothing to her; and yet she must be its mistress," she added, looking round on everything in the room, and then bursting into tears.

Now, Miss Grace was not one of the crying sort, and so this emotion went to her friend's heart. Miss Letitia went up and put her arms round her. "Come, Gracie," she said, "you must not take it so seriously. John is a noble, manly fellow. He loves you, and he will always be master of his own house."

"No, he won't, — no married man ever is," said Miss

Grace, wiping her eyes and sitting up very straight. "No man, that is a gentleman, is ever master in his own house. He has only such rights there as his wife chooses to give him; and this woman won't like me, I 'm sure."

"Perhaps she will," said Letitia in a faltering voice.

"No, she won't; because I have no faculty for lying, or playing the hypocrite in any way, and I sha'n't approve of her. These soft, slippery, pretty little fibbing women have always been my abomination."

"Oh, my dear Grace!" said Miss Ferguson, "do let us make the best of it."

"I did think," said Miss Grace, wiping her eyes, "that John had some sense. I was n't such a fool, nor so selfish, as to want him always to live for me. I wanted him to marry; and if he had got engaged to your Rose, for instance — Oh, Letitia! I always did so hope that he and Rose would like each other."

"We can't choose for our brothers," said Miss Letitia, "and, hard as it is, we must make up our minds to love those they bring to us. Who knows what good influences may do for poor Lillie Ellis? She never has had any yet. Her family are extremely common sort of people, without any culture or breeding, and only her wonderful beauty brought them into notice; and they have always used that as a sort of stock in trade."

"And John says, in this letter, that she reminds him of our mother," said Miss Grace; "and he thinks that naturally she was very much such a character. Just think of that, now!"

"He must be far gone," said Miss Ferguson; "but then, you see, she is distractingly pretty. She has just the most exquisitely pearly, pure, delicate, saintlike look, at times, that you ever saw; and then she knows exactly how she does look, and just how to use her looks; and John can't be blamed for believing in her. I, who know all about her, am sometimes taken in by her."

"Well," said Miss Grace, "Mrs. Lennox was at Newport last summer at the time that she was there, and she told me all about her. I think her an artful, unscrupulous, unprincipled woman, and her being made mistress of this house just breaks up our pleasant sociable life here. She has no literary tastes; she does not care for reading or study; she won't like our set here, and she will gradually drive them from the house. She won't like me, and she will want to alienate John from me, — so there is just the situation. You may read that letter," added Miss Grace, wiping her eyes and tossing her brother's letter into Miss Letitia's lap.

Miss Letitia took the letter and read it. "Good fellow!" she exclaimed warmly, "you see just what I say, — his heart is all with you."

"Oh, John's heart is all right enough!" said Miss Grace; "and I don't doubt his love. He 's the best, noblest, most affectionate fellow in the world. I only think he reckons without his host, in thinking he can keep all our old relations unbroken when he puts a new mistress into the house, and such a mistress."

"But if she really loves him" —

"Pshaw! she don't. That kind of woman can't love. They are like cats, that want to be stroked and caressed, and to be petted, and to lie soft and warm; and they will purr to any one that will pet them, — that 's all. As for love that leads to any self-sacrifice, they don't begin to know anything about it."

"Gracie dear," said Miss Ferguson, "this sort of thing will never do. If you meet your brother in this way, you will throw him off, and, maybe, make a fatal breach. Meet it like a good Christian, as you are. You know," she said gently, "where we have a right to carry our troubles, and of whom we should ask guidance."

"Oh, I do know, 'Titia!" said Miss Grace; "but I am

letting myself be wicked just a little, you know, to relieve my mind. I ought to put myself to school to make the best of it; but it came on me so *very* suddenly. Yes," she added, "I am going to take a course of my Bible and Fénélon before I see John, — poor fellow."

"And try to have faith for her," said Miss Letitia.

"Well, I 'll try to have faith," said Miss Grace; "but I do trust it will be some days before John comes down on me with his raptures, men in love are such fools."

"But, dear me!" said Miss Letitia, as her head accidentally turned towards the window, "who is this riding up? Gracie, as sure as you live, it is John himself!"

"John himself!" repeated Miss Grace, becoming pale.

"Now do, dear, be careful," said Miss Letitia. "I 'll just run out this back door and leave you alone;" and just as Miss Letitia's light heels were heard going down the back steps John's heavy footsteps were coming up the front ones.

CHAPTER III

THE SISTER

Grace Seymour was a specimen of a class of whom we are happy to say New England possesses a great many. She was a highly cultivated, intelligent, and refined woman, arrived at the full age of mature womanhood unmarried, and with no present thought or prospect of marriage. I presume all my readers who are in a position to run over the society of our rural New England towns can recall to their minds hundreds of such. They are women too thoughtful, too conscientious, too delicate, to marry for anything but a purely personal affection; and this affection, for various reasons, has not fallen in their way.

The tendency of life in these towns is to throw the young men of the place into distant fields of adventure and enterprise in the far Western and Southern States, leaving at their old homes a population in which the feminine element largely predominates. It is not, generally speaking, the most cultivated or the most attractive of the brethren who remain in the place where they were born. The ardent, the daring, the enterprising, are off to the ends of the earth; and the choice of the sisters who remain at home is, therefore, confined to a restricted list; and so it ends in these delightful rose gardens of single women which abound in New England, — women who remain at home as housekeepers to aged parents, and charming persons in society; women over whose graces of conversation and manner the married men in their vicinity go off into raptures of eulogium, which generally end with, "Why has n't that woman ever got married?"

It often happens to such women to expend on some brother that stock of hero-worship and devotion which it has not come in their way to give to a nearer friend. Alas, it is building on a sandy foundation; for just as the union of hearts is complete, the chemical affinity which began in the cradle, and strengthens with every year of life, is dissolved by the introduction of that third element which makes of the brother a husband, while the new combination casts out the old, — sometimes with a disagreeable effervescence.

John and Grace Seymour were two only children of a very affectionate family; and they had grown up in the closest habits of intimacy. They had written to each other those long letters in which thoughtful people who live in retired situations delight; letters not of outward events, but of sentiments and opinions, the phases of the inner life. They had studied and pursued courses of reading together. They had together organized and carried on works of benevolence and charity.

The brother and sister had been left joint heirs of a large manufacturing property, employing hundreds of hands, in their vicinity; and the care and cultivation of these work-people, the education of their children, had been most conscientiously upon their minds. Half of every Sunday they devoted together to labors in the Sunday-school of their manufacturing village; and the two worked so harmoniously together in the interests of their life, that Grace had never felt the want of any domestic ties or relations other than those that she had.

Our readers may perhaps, therefore, concede that, among the many claimants for their sympathy in this cross-grained world of ours, some few grains of it may properly be due to Grace. Things are trials that try us; afflictions are what afflict us; and under this showing Grace was both tried and afflicted by the sudden engagement of her brother.

When the whole groundwork on which one's daily life is built caves in, and falls into the cellar without one moment's warning, it is not in human nature to pick one's self up, and reconstruct and rearrange in a moment. So Grace thought, at any rate; but she made a hurried effort to dash back her tears, and gulp down a rising in her throat, anxious only not to be selfish, and not to disgust her brother in the outset with any personal egotism. So she ran to the front door to meet him, and fell into his arms, trying so hard to seem congratulatory and affectionate that she broke out into sobbing.

"My dear Gracie," said John, embracing and kissing her with that gushing fervor with which newly engaged gentlemen are apt to deluge every creature whom they meet, "you 've got my letter. Well, were not you astonished?"

"Oh, John, it was so sudden!" was all poor Grace could say. "And you know, John, since mother died, you and I have been all in all to each other."

"And so we shall be, Gracie. Why, yes, of course we shall," he said, stroking her hair, and playing with her trembling, thin, white hands. "Why, this only makes me love you the more now; and you will love my little Lillie: fact is, you can't help it. We shall both of us be happier for having her here."

"Well, you know, John, I never saw her," said Grace deprecatingly, "and so you can't wonder."

"Oh yes, of course! Don't wonder in the least. It comes rather sudden, — and then you have n't seen her. Look, here is her photograph!" said John, producing one from the most orthodox innermost region, directly over his heart. "Look there! is n't it beautiful?"

"It is a very sweet face," said Grace, exerting herself to be sympathetic, and thankful that she could say that much truthfully.

"I can't imagine," said John, "what ever made her like me. You know she has refused half the fellows in the country. I had n't the remotest idea that she would have anything to say to me; but you see there 's no accounting for tastes;" and John plumed himself, as young gentlemen do who have carried off prizes. "You see," he added, "it 's odd, but she took a fancy to me the first time she saw me. Now, you know, Gracie, I never found it easy to get along with ladies at first; but Lillie has the most extraordinary way of putting a fellow at his ease. Why, she made me feel like an old friend the first hour."

"Indeed!"

"Look here," said John, triumphantly drawing out his pocketbook, and producing thence a knot of rose-colored satin ribbon. "Did you ever see such a lovely color as this? It 's so exquisite, you see! Well, she always is wearing just such knots of ribbon, the most lovely shades. Why, there is n't one woman in a thousand could wear the things she does. Everything becomes her. Sometimes it 's rose color, or lilac, or pale blue, — just the most trying things to others are what she can wear."

"Dear John, I hope you looked for something deeper than the complexion in a wife," said Grace, driven to moral reflections in spite of herself.

"Oh, of course!" said John; "she has such soft, gentle, winning ways; she is so sympathetic; she 's just the wife to make home happy, to be a bond of union to us all. Now, in a wife, what we want is just that. Lillie's mind, for instance, has n't been cultivated as yours and Letitia's. She is n't at all that sort of girl. She 's just a dear, gentle, little confiding creature, that you 'll delight in. You 'll form her mind, and she 'll look up to you. You know she 's young yet."

"Young, John! Why, she 's seven-and-twenty," said Grace, with astonishment.

"Oh no, my dear Gracie! that is all a mistake. She told me herself she 's only twenty. You see, the trouble is, she went into company injudiciously early, a mere baby, in fact; and that causes her to have the name of being older than she is. But I do assure you, she 's only twenty. She told me so herself."

"Oh, indeed!" said Grace, prudently choking back the contradiction which she longed to utter. "I know it seems a good many summers since I heard of her as a belle at Newport."

"Ah, yes, exactly! You see, she went into company, as a young lady, when she was only thirteen. She told me all about it. Her parents were very injudicious, and they pushed her forward. She regrets it now. She knows that it was n't the thing at all. She 's very sensitive to the defects in her early education; but I made her understand that it was the heart more than the head that I cared for. I dare say, Gracie, she 'll fall into all our little ways without really knowing; and you, in point of fact, will be mistress of the house as much as you ever were. Lillie is delicate, and never has had any care, and will be only too happy to depend on you. She 's one of the gentle, dependent sort, you know."

To this statement Grace did not reply. She only began nervously sweeping together the débris of leaves and flowers which encumbered the table, on which the newly arranged flower vases were standing. Then she arranged the vases with great precision on the mantel-shelf. As she was doing it, so many memories rushed over her of that room and her mother, and the happy, peaceful family life that had hitherto been led there, that she quite broke down; and sitting down in the chair, she covered her face, and went off in a good, hearty crying spell.

Poor John was inexpressibly shocked. He loved and revered his sister beyond anything in the world; and it

occurred to him, in a dim wise, that to be suddenly dispossessed and shut out in the cold, when one has hitherto been the first object of affection, is, to make the best of it, a real and sore trial.

But Grace soon recovered herself, and rose up smiling through her tears. "What a fool I am making of myself!" she said. "The fact is, John, I am only a little nervous. You must n't mind it. You know," she said, laughing, "we old maids are like cats, — we find it hard to be put out of our old routine. I dare say we shall all of us be happier in the end for this, and I shall try to do all I can to make it so. Perhaps, John, I 'd better take that little house of mine on Elm Street, and set up my tent in it, and take all the old furniture and old pictures and old-time things. You 'll be wanting to modernize and make over this house, you know, to suit a young wife."

"Nonsense, Gracie; no such thing!" said John. "Do you suppose I want to leave all the past associations of my life, and strip my home bare of all pleasant memorials, because I bring a little wife here? Why, the very idea of a wife is somebody to sympathize in your tastes; and Lillie will love and appreciate all these dear old things as you and I do. She has such a sympathetic heart! If you want to make me happy, Gracie, stay here, and let us live, as near as may be, as before."

"So we will, John," said Grace, so cheerfully that John considered the whole matter as settled, and rushed upstairs to write his daily letter to Lillie.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

Miss Lillie Ellis was sitting upstairs in her virgin bower, which was now converted into a tumultuous, seething caldron of millinery and mantua-making, such as usually precedes a wedding. To be sure, orders had been forthwith dispatched to Paris for the bridal regimentals and for a good part of the trousseau ; but that did not seem in the least to stand in the way of the time-honored confusion of sewing preparations at home, which is supposed to waste the strength and exhaust the health of every bride elect.

Whether young women, while disengaged, do not have proper underclothing, or whether they contemplate marriage as an awful gulf which swallows up all future possibilities of replenishing a wardrobe, — certain it is that no sooner is a girl engaged to be married than there is a blind and distracting rush and pressure and haste to make up for her immediately a stock of articles which, up to that hour, she has managed to live very comfortably and respectably without. It is astonishing to behold the number of inexpressible things with French names which unmarried young ladies never think of wanting, but which there is a desperate push to supply, and have ranged in order, the moment the matrimonial state is in contemplation.

Therefore it was that the virgin bower of Lillie was knee-deep in a tangled mass of stuffs of various hues and description; that the sharp sound of tearing off breadths resounded there; that Miss Clippins and Miss Snippins

and Miss Nippins were sewing there day and night; that a sewing-machine was busily rattling in mamma's room; and that there were all sorts of pinking and quilling, and braiding and hemming, and whipping and ruffling, and oversewing and catstitching and hemstitching, and other female mysteries, going on.

As for Lillie, she lay in a loose *négligé* on the bed, ready every five minutes to be called up to have something measured, or tried on, or fitted; and to be consulted whether there should be fifteen or sixteen tucks and then an insertion, or sixteen tucks and a series of puffs. Her labors wore upon her; and it was smilingly observed by Miss Clippins across to Miss Nippins, that Miss Lillie was beginning to show her "engagement bones." In the midst of these preoccupations a letter was handed to her by the giggling chambermaid. It was a thick letter, directed in a bold, honest hand. Miss Lillie took it with a languid little yawn, finished the last sentences in a chapter of the novel she was reading, and then leisurely broke the seal and glanced it over. It was the one that the enraptured John had spent his morning in writing.

"Miss Ellis, now, if you 'll try on this jacket — oh! I beg your pardon," said Miss Clippins, observing the letter; "we can wait, of course;" and then all three laughed as if something very pleasant was in their minds.

"No," said Lillie, giving the letter a toss, "it 'll keep;" and she stood up to have a jaunty little blue jacket, with its fluffy bordering of swan's-down, fitted upon her.

"It 's too bad, now, to take you from your letter," said Miss Clippins, with a sly nod.

"I 'm sure you take it philosophically," said Miss Nippins, with a giggle.

"Why should n't I?" said the divine Lillie. "I get one every day; and it 's all the old story. I 've heard it ever since I was born."

"Well, now, to be sure you have. Let's see," said Miss Clippins, "this is the seventy-fourth or seventy-fifth offer, was it?"

"Oh, you must ask mamma! she keeps the lists; I'm sure I don't trouble my head," said the little beauty; and she looked so natty and jaunty when she said it, just arching her queenly white neck, and making soft, downy dimples in her cheeks as she gave her fresh little childlike laugh; turning round and round before the looking-glass, and issuing her orders for the fitting of the jacket with a precision and real interest which showed that there *were* things in the world which didn't become old stories, even if one had been used to them ever since one was born.

Lillie never was caught napping when the point in question was the fit of her clothes. When released from the little blue jacket, there was a rose-colored morning-dress to be tried on, and a grave discussion as to whether the honiton lace was to be set on plain or frilled. So important was this case, that mamma was summoned from the sewing-machine to give her opinion. Mrs. Ellis was a fat, fair, rosy matron of most undisturbed conscience and digestion, whose main business in life had always been to see to her children's clothes. She had brought up Lillie with faithful and religious zeal; that is to say, she had always ruffled her underclothes with her own hands, and darned her stockings, sick or well; and also, as before intimated, kept a list of her offers, which she was ready in confidential moments to tell off to any of her acquaintance. The question of ruffled or plain honiton was of such vital importance, that the whole four took some time in considering it in its various points of view.

"Sarah Selfridge had hers ruffled," said Lillie.

"And the effect was perfectly sweet," said Miss Clippins.

"Perhaps, Lillie, you had better have it ruffled," said mamma.

"But three rows laid on plain has such a lovely effect," said Miss Nippins.

"Perhaps, then, she had better have three rows laid on plain," said mamma.

"Or she might have one row ruffled on the edge, with three rows laid on plain, with a satin fold," said Miss Clippins. "That 's the way I fixed Miss Elliott's."

"That would be a nice way," said mamma. "Perhaps, Lillie, you 'd better have it so."

"Oh! come now, all of you, just hush," said Lillie. "I know just how I want it done."

The words may sound a little rude and dictatorial; but Lillie had the advantage of always looking so pretty, and saying dictatorial things in such a sweet voice, that everybody was delighted with them; and she took the matter of arranging the trimming in hand with a clearness of head which showed that it was a subject to which she had given mature consideration. Mrs. Ellis shook her fat sides with a comfortable motherly chuckle.

"Lillie always did know exactly what she wanted; she 's a smart little thing."

And when all the trying on and arranging of folds and frills and pinks and bows was over, Lillie threw herself comfortably upon the bed, to finish her letter.

Shrewd Miss Clippins detected the yawn with which she laid down the missive. "Seems to me your letters don't meet a very warm reception," she said.

"Well! every day, and such long ones!" Lillie answered, turning over the pages. "See there," she went on, opening a drawer, "what a heap of them! I can't see, for my part, what any one can want to write a letter every day to anybody for. John is such a goose about me."

"He 'll get over it after he 's been married six months," said Miss Clippins, nodding her head with the air of a woman that has seen life.

"I 'm sure I sha'n't care," said Lillie, with a toss of her pretty head. "It 's *borous* anyway."

Our readers may perhaps imagine, from the story thus far, that our little Lillie is by no means the person, in reality, that John supposes her to be, when he sits thinking of her with such devotion, and writing her such long, "borous" letters. She is not. John is in love, not with the actual Lillie Ellis, but with that ideal personage who looks like his mother's picture, and is the embodiment of all his mother's virtues. The feeling, as it exists in John's mind, is not only a most respectable, but in fact a truly divine one, and one that no mortal man ought to be ashamed of. The love that quickens all the nature, that makes a man twice manly, and makes him aspire to all that is high, pure, sweet, and religious, is a feeling so sacred, that no unworthiness in its object can make it any less beautiful. More often than not it is spent on an utter vacancy. Men and women both pass through this divine initiation, — this sacred inspiration of our nature, — and find, when they have come into the innermost shrine, where the divinity ought to be, that there is no god or goddess there; nothing but the cold black ashes of commonplace vulgarity and selfishness. Both of them, when the grand discovery has been made, do well to fold their robes decently about them, and make the best of the matter. If they cannot love, they can at least be friendly. They can tolerate, as philosophers; pity, as Christians; and finding just where and how the burden of an ill-assorted union galls the least, can then and there strap it on their backs, and walk on, not only without complaint, but sometimes in a cheerful and hilarious spirit.

Not a word of all this thinks our friend John, as he sits longing, aspiring, and pouring out his heart, day after day, in letters that interrupt Lillie in the all-important responsibility of getting her wardrobe fitted. Shall we

think this smooth little fair-skinned Lillie is a cold-hearted monster, because her heart does not beat faster at these letters which she does not understand, and which strike her as unnecessarily prolix and prosy? Why should John insist on telling her his feelings and opinions on a vast variety of subjects that she does not care a button for? She does n't know anything about ritualism and anti-ritualism; and, what 's more, she does n't care. She hates to hear so much about religion. She thinks it 's poky. John may go to any church he pleases, for all her. As to all that about his favorite poems, she don't like poetry, — never could, — don't see any sense in it; and John *will* be quoting ever so much in his letters. Then, as to the love parts, — it may be all quite new and exciting to John; but she has, as she said, heard that story over and over again, till it strikes her as quite a matter of course. Without doubt the whole world is a desert where she is not; the thing has been asserted, over and over, by so many gentlemen of credible character for truth and veracity, that she is forced to believe it; and she cannot see why John is particularly to be pitied on this account. He is in no more desperate state about her than the rest of them; and secretly Lillie has as little pity for lovers' pangs as a nice little white cat has for mice. They amuse her; they are her appropriate recreation; and she pats and plays with each mouse in succession, without any comprehension that it may be a serious thing for him.

When Lillie was a little girl, eight years old, she used to sell her kisses through the slats of the fence for papers of candy, and thus early acquired the idea that her charms were a capital to be employed in trading for the good things of life. She had the misfortune — and a great one it is — to have been singularly beautiful from the cradle, and so was praised and exclaimed over and caressed as she walked through the streets. She was sent for, far and

near; borrowed to be looked at; her picture taken by photographers. If one reflects how many foolish and inconsiderate people there are in the world, who have no scruple in making a pet and plaything of a pretty child, one will see how this one unlucky lot of being beautiful in childhood spoiled Lillie's chances of an average share of good sense and goodness. The only hope for such a case lies in the chance of possessing judicious parents. Lillie had not these. Her father was a shrewd grocer, and nothing more; and her mother was a competent cook and seamstress. While he traded in sugar and salt, and she made pickles and embroided under-linen, the pretty Lillie was educated as pleased Heaven.

Pretty girls, unless they have wise mothers, are more educated by the opposite sex than by their own. Put them where you will, there is always some man busying himself in their instruction; and the burden of masculine teaching is generally about the same, and might be stereotyped as follows: "You don't need to be or do anything. Your business in life is to look pretty, and amuse us. You don't need to study; you know all by nature that a woman need to know. You are, by virtue of being a pretty woman, superior to anything we can teach you; and we would n't, for the world, have you anything but what you are." When Lillie went to school, this was what her masters whispered in her ear as they did her sums for her, and helped her through her lessons and exercises, and looked into her eyes. This was what her young gentlemen friends, themselves delving in Latin and Greek and mathematics, told her, when they came to recreate from their severer studies in her smile. Men are held to account for talking sense. Pretty women are told that lively nonsense is their best sense. Now and then, an admirer bolder than the rest ventured to take Lillie's education more earnestly in hand, and recommended to her

just a little reading, — enough to enable her to carry on conversation, and appear to know something of the ordinary topics discussed in society, — but informed her, by the bye, that there was no sort of need of being either profound or accurate in these matters, as the mistakes of a pretty woman had a grace of their own.

At seventeen, Lillie graduated from Dr. Sibthorpe's school with a "finished education." She had, somehow or other, picked her way through various "ologies" and exercises supposed to be necessary for a well-informed young lady. She wrote a pretty hand, spoke French with a good accent, and could turn a sentimental note neatly; "and that, my dear," said Dr. Sibthorpe to his wife, "is all that a woman needs who so evidently is intended for wife and mother as our little Lillie." Dr. Sibthorpe, in fact, had amused himself with a semi-paternal flirtation with his pupil during the whole course of her school exercises, and parted from her with tears in his eyes, greatly to her amusement; for Lillie, after all, estimated his devotion at just about what it was worth. It amused her to see him make a fool of himself.

Of course, the next thing was — to be married; and Lillie's life now became a round of dressing, dancing, going to watering-places, traveling, and in other ways seeking the fulfillment of her destiny. She had precisely the accessible, easy softness of manner that leads every man to believe that he may prove a favorite, and her run of offers became quite a source of amusement. Her arrival at watering-places was noted in initials in the papers; her dress on every public occasion was described; and as acknowledged queen of love and beauty, she had everywhere her little court of men and women flatterers. The women flatterers around a belle are as much a part of the cortége as the men. They repeat the compliments they hear, and burn incense in the virgin's bower at hours when the profaner sex may not enter.

The life of a petted creature consists essentially in being deferred to, for being pretty and useless. A petted child runs a great risk if it is ever to outgrow childhood; but a pet woman is a perpetual child. The pet woman of society is everybody's toy. Everybody looks at her, admires her, praises and flatters her, stirs her up to play off her little airs and graces for their entertainment, and passes on. Men of profound sense encourage her to chatter nonsense for their amusement, just as we delight in the tottering steps and stammering mispronunciations of a golden-haired child. When Lillie has been in Washington, she has had judges of the Supreme Court and secretaries of state delighted to have her give her opinions in their respective departments. Scholars and literary men flocked around her, to the neglect of many a more instructed woman, satisfied that she knew enough to blunder agreeably on every subject.

Nor is there anything in the Christian civilization of our present century that condemns the kind of life we are describing as in any respect unwomanly or unbecoming. Something very like it is in a measure considered as the appointed rule of attractive young girls till they are married.

Lillie had numbered among her admirers many lights of the Church. She had flirted with bishops, priests, and deacons, — who, none of them, would, for the world, have been so ungallant as to quote to her such dreadful professional passages as, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." In fact, the clergy, when off duty, are no safer guides of attractive young women than other mortal men; and Lillie had so often seen their spiritual attentions degenerate into downright, temporal love-making, that she held them in as small reverence as the rest of their sex. Only one dreadful John the Baptist of her acquaintance, one of the camel's-hair-girdle and locust-and-

wild-honey species, once encountering Lillie at Saratoga, and observing the ways and manners of the court which she kept there, took it upon him to give her a spiritual admonition.

"Miss Lillie," he said, "I see no chance for the salvation of your soul, unless it should please God to send the smallpox upon you. I think I shall pray for that."

"Oh, horrors! don't! I 'd rather never be saved," Lillie answered with a fervent sincerity.

The story was repeated afterwards as an amusing *bon mot*, and a specimen of the barbarity to which religious fanaticism may lead; and yet we question whether John the Baptist had not the right of it. For it must at once appear, that, had the smallpox made the above-mentioned change in Lillie's complexion at sixteen, the entire course of her life would have taken another turn. The whole world then would have united in letting her know that she must live to some useful purpose, or be nobody and nothing. Schoolmasters would have scolded her if she idled over her lessons; and her breaking down in arithmetic and mistakes in history would no longer have been regarded as interesting. Clergymen, consulted on her spiritual state, would have told her freely that she was a miserable sinner, who, except she repented, must likewise perish. In short, all those bitter and wholesome truths, which strengthen and invigorate the virtues of plain people, might possibly have led her a long way on towards saintship.

As it was, little Lillie was confessedly no saint; and yet, if much of a sinner, society has as much to answer for as she. She was the daughter and flower of the Christian civilization of the nineteenth century, and the kind of woman, that, on the whole, men of quite distinguished sense have been fond of choosing for wives, and will go on seeking to the end of the chapter.

Did she love John? Well, she was quite pleased to be loved by him, and she liked the prospect of being his wife. She was sure he would always let her have her own way, and that he had a plenty of worldly means to do it with.

Lillie, if not very clever in a literary or scientific point of view, was no fool. She had, in fact, under all her softness of manner, a great deal of that real hard grit which shrewd, worldly people call common sense. She saw through all the illusions of fancy and feeling, right to the tough material core of things. However soft and tender and sentimental her habits of speech and action were in her professional capacity of a charming woman, still the fair Lillie, had she been a man, would have been respected in the business world as one that had cut her eye-teeth, and knew on which side her bread was buttered.

A husband, she knew very well, was the man who undertook to be responsible for his wife's bills; he was the giver, bringer, and maintainer of all sorts of solid and appreciable comforts. Lillie's bills had hitherto been sore places in the domestic history of her family. The career of a fashionable belle is not to be supported without something of an outlay; and that innocence of arithmetical combinations, over which she was wont to laugh bewitchingly among her adorers, sometimes led to results quite astounding to the prosaic, hard-working papa, who stood financially responsible for all her finery. Mamma had often been called in to calm the tumult of his feelings on such semi-annual developments; and she did it by pointing out to him that this heavy present expense was an investment by which Lillie was, in the end, to make her own fortune and that of her family.

When Lillie contemplated the marriage service with a view to going through it with John, there was one clause that stood out in consoling distinctness, "With all my

worldly goods I thee endow." As to the other clause which contains the dreadful word "obey," about which our modern women have such fearful apprehensions, Lillie was ready to swallow it without even a grimace. "Obey John!" Her face wore a pretty air of droll assurance at the thought. It was too funny.

"My dear," said Belle Trevors, who was one of Lillie's incense-burners and a bridesmaid elect, "have you the least idea how rich he is?"

"He is well enough off to do about anything I want," said Lillie.

"Well, you know he owns the whole village of Spindlewood, with all those great factories, besides law business," said Belle. "But then they live in a dreadfully slow, poky way down there in Springdale. They have n't the remotest idea how to use money."

"I can show him how to use it," said Lillie.

"He and his sister keep a nice sort of old-fashioned place there, and jog about in an old countrified carriage, picking up poor children and visiting schools. She is a very superior woman, that sister."

"I don't like superior women," said Lillie.

"But you must like her, you know. John is perfectly devoted to her, and I suppose she is to be a fixture in the establishment."

"We shall see about that," said Lillie. "One thing at a time. I don't mean he shall live at Springdale. It 's horridly poky to live in those little country towns. He must have a house in New York."

"And a place at Newport for the summer," said Belle Trevors.

"Yes," said Lillie, "a cottage in Newport does very well in the season; and then a country place well fitted up to invite company to in the other months of summer."

"Delightful," said Belle, "if you can make him do it."

"See if I don't," said Lillie.

"You dear, funny creature, you, — how you do always ride on the top of the wave!" said Belle.

"It 's what I was born for," said Lillie. "By the bye, Belle, I got a letter from Harry last night."

"Poor fellow, had he heard" —

"Why, of course not. I did n't want he should till it 's all over. It 's best, you know."

"He is such a good fellow, and so devoted, — it does seem a pity."

"Devoted! well, I should rather think he was," said Lillie. "I believe he would cut off his right hand for me, any day. But I never gave him any encouragement. I 've always told him I could be to him only as a sister, you know."

"You ought not to write to him," said Belle.

"What can I do? He is perfectly desperate if I don't, and still persists that he means to marry me some day, spite of my screams."

"Well, he 'll have to stop making love to you after you 're married."

"Oh, pshaw! I don't believe that old-fashioned talk. Lovers make a variety in life. I don't see why a married woman is to give up all the fun of having admirers. Of course, one is n't going to do anything wrong, you know; but one does n't want to settle down into Darby and Joan at once. Why, some of the young married women, the most stunning belles at Newport last year, got a great deal more attention after they were married than they did before. You see, the fellows like it, because they are so sure not to be drawn in."

"I think it 's too bad on us girls, though," said Belle. "You ought to leave us our turn."

"Oh! I'll turn over any of them to you, Belle," said Lillie. "There's Harry, to begin with. What do you say to him?"

"Thank you, I don't think I shall take up with second-hand articles," said Belle, with some spirit.

But here the entrance of the chambermaid, with a fresh dress from the dressmaker's, resolved the conversation into a discussion so very minute and technical that it cannot be recorded in our pages.

CHAPTER V

WEDDING AND WEDDING TRIP

WELL, and so they were married, with all the newest modern forms, ceremonies, and accessories. Every possible thing was done to reflect lustre on the occasion. There were eight bridesmaids, and every one of them fair as the moon; and eight groomsmen, with white satin ribbons and white rosebuds in their buttonholes; and there was a bishop, assisted by a priest, to give the solemn benedictions of the Church; and there was a marriage bell of tuberoses and lilies, of enormous size, swinging over the heads of the pair at the altar; and there were voluntaries on the organ, and chantings, and what not, all solemn and impressive as possible. In the midst of all this, the fair Lillie promised, "forsaking all others, to keep only unto him, so long as they both should live," — "to love, honor, and obey, until death did them part."

During the whole agitating scene Lillie kept up her presence of mind, and was perfectly aware of what she was about; so that a very fresh, original, and crisp style of trimming, that had been invented in Paris specially for her wedding toilet, received no detriment from the least unguarded movement. We much regret that it is contrary to our literary principles to write half, or one third, in French; because the wedding dress, by far the most important object on this occasion, and certainly one that most engrossed the thoughts of the bride, was one entirely indescribable in English. Just as there is no word in the Hottentot vocabulary for "holiness," or "purity," so there

are no words in our savage English to describe a lady's dress; and, therefore, our fair friends must be recommended, on this point, to exercise their imagination in connection with the study of the finest French plates, and they may get some idea of Lillie in her wedding robe and train.

Then there was the wedding banquet, where everybody ate quantities of the most fashionable, indigestible horrors with praiseworthy courage and enthusiasm; for what is to become of *pâté de fois gras* if we don't eat it? What is to become of us if we do is entirely a secondary question.

On the whole, there was not one jot or tittle of the most exorbitant requirements of fashion that was not fulfilled on this occasion. The house was a crush of wilting flowers, and smelt of tuberoses enough to give one a vertigo for a month. A band of music brayed and clashed every minute of the time; and a jam of people, in elegant dresses, shrieked to each other above the din, and several of Lillie's former admirers got tipsy in the supper-room. In short, nothing could be finer; and it was agreed, on all hands, that it was "stunning." Accounts of it, and of all the bride's dresses, presents, and even wardrobe, went into the daily papers; and thus was the charming Lillie Ellis made into Mrs. John Seymour.

Then followed the approved wedding journey, the programme of which had been drawn up by Lillie herself, with carte blanche from John, and included every place where a bride's new toilets could be seen in the most select fashionable circles. They went to Niagara and Trenton, they went to Newport and Saratoga, to the White Mountains and Montreal; and Mrs. John Seymour was a meteor of fashionable wonder and delight at all these places. Her dresses and her diamonds, her hats and her bonnets, were all wonderful to behold. The stir and excitement that

she had created as simple Miss Ellis was nothing to the stir and excitement about Mrs. John Seymour. It was the mere grub compared with the full-blown butterfly, — the bud compared with the rose. Wherever she appeared, her old admirers flocked in her train. The unmarried girls were, so to speak, nowhere. Marriage was a new lease of power and splendor, and she reveled in it like a humming-bird in the sunshine.

And was John equally happy? Well, to say the truth, John's head was a little turned by the possession of this curious and manifold creature, that fluttered and flapped her wings about the eyes and ears of his understanding, and appeared before him every day in some new device of the toilet, fair and fresh; smiling and bewitching, kissing and coaxing, laughing and crying, and in all ways bewildering him, the once sober-minded John, till he scarce knew whether he stood on his head or his heels. He knew that this sort of rattling, scatter-brained life must come to an end some time. He knew there was a sober, serious life-work for him; something that must try his mind and soul and strength, and that would, by and by, leave him neither time nor strength to be the mere wandering attaché of a gay bird, whose string he held in hand, and who now seemed to pull him hither and thither at her will.

John thought of all these things at intervals; and then, when he thought of the quiet, sober, respectable life at Springdale, of the good old staple families, with their steady ways, — of the girls in his neighborhood with their reading societies, their sewing-circles for the poor, their book clubs and art unions for practice in various accomplishments, — he thought, with apprehension, that there appeared not a spark of interest in his charmer's mind for anything in this direction. She never had read anything, — knew nothing on all those subjects about which the

women and young girls in his circle were interested; while in Springdale there were none of the excitements which made her interested in life. He could not help perceiving that Lillie's five hundred particular friends were mostly of the other sex, and wondering whether he alone, when the matter should be reduced to that, could make up to her for all her retinue of slaves.

Like most good boys who grow into good men, John had unlimited faith in women. Whatever little defects and flaws they might have, still at heart he supposed they were all of the same substratum as his mother and sister. The moment a woman was married, he imagined that all the lovely domestic graces would spring up in her, no matter what might have been her previous disadvantages, merely because she was a woman. He had no doubt of the usual orthodox oak-and-ivy theory in relation to man and woman; and that his wife, when he got one, would be the clinging ivy that would bend her flexible tendrils in the way his strong will and wisdom directed. He had never, perhaps, seen, in southern regions, a fine tree completely smothered and killed in the embraces of a gay, flaunting parasite, and so received no warning from vegetable analogies.

Somehow or other, he was persuaded, he should gradually bring his wife to all his own ways of thinking, and all his schemes and plans and opinions. This might, he thought, be difficult, were she one of the pronounced, strong-minded sort, accustomed to thinking and judging for herself. Such a one, he could easily imagine, there might be a risk in encountering in the close intimacy of domestic life. Even in his dealings with his sister he was made aware of a force of character and a vigor of intellect that sometimes made the carrying of his own way over hers a matter of some difficulty. Were it not that Grace was the best of women, and her ways always the very best

of ways, John was not so sure but that she might prove a little too masterful for him.

But this lovely bit of pink and white; this downy, gauzy, airy little elf; this creature, so slim and slender and unsubstantial, — surely he need have no fear that he could not mould and control and manage her? Oh no! He imagined her melting, like a moonbeam, into all manner of sweet compliances, becoming an image and reflection of his own better self; and repeated to himself the lines of Wordsworth: —

> "I saw her, on a nearer view,
> A spirit, yet a woman too, —
> Her household motions light and free,
> And steps of virgin liberty.
> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food,
> For transient pleasures, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles."

John fancied he saw his little Lillie subdued into a pattern wife, weaned from fashionable follies, eagerly seeking mental improvement under his guidance, and joining him and Grace in all sorts of edifying works and ways. The reader may see, from the conversations we have detailed, that nothing was further from Lillie's intentions than any such conformity. The intentions of the married pair, in fact, ran exactly contrary to one another. John meant to bring Lillie to a sober, rational, useful family life; and Lillie meant to run a career of fashionable display, and make John pay for it.

Neither, at present, stated their purposes precisely to the other, because they were "honeymooning." John, as yet, was the enraptured lover; and Lillie was his pink and white sultana, — his absolute mistress, her word was law, and his will was hers. How the case was ever to be reversed, so as to suit the terms of the marriage service,

John did not precisely inquire. But when husband and wife start in life with exactly opposing intentions, which, think you, is likely to conquer, — the man or the woman? That is a very nice question, and deserves further consideration.

CHAPTER VI

HONEYMOON, AND AFTER

We left Mr. and Mrs. John Seymour honeymooning. The honeymoon, dear ladies, is supposed to be the period of male subjection. The young queen is enthroned; and the first of her slaves walks obediently in her train, carries her fan, her parasol, runs on her errands, packs her trunk, writes her letters, buys her anything she cries for, and is ready to do the impossible for her, on every suitable occasion.

A great strong man sometimes feels awkwardly when thus led captive; but the greatest, strongest, and most boastful often go most obediently under woman-rule; for which see Shakespeare, concerning Cleopatra and Julius Cæsar and Mark Antony. But then all kingdoms, and all sway, and all authority must come to an end. Nothing lasts, you see. The plain prose of life must have its turn, after the poetry and honeymoons — stretch them out to their utmost limit — have their terminus. So at the end of six weeks, John and Lillie, somewhat dusty and travel-worn, were received by Grace into the old family mansion at Springdale.

Grace had read her Bible and Fénélon to such purpose that she had accepted her cross with open arms. Dear reader, Grace was not a severe, angular, old-maid sister, ready to snarl at the advent of a young beauty; but an elegant and accomplished woman, with a wide culture, a trained and disciplined mind, a charming taste, and polished manners, and, above all, a thorough self-understand-

ing and discipline. Though past thirty, she still had admirers and lovers; yet till now, her brother, insensibly to herself, had blocked up the doorway of her heart; and the perfectness of the fraternal friendship had prevented the wish and the longing by which some fortunate man might have found and given happiness. Grace had resolved she would love her new sister; that she would look upon all her past faults and errors with eyes of indulgence; that she would put out of her head every story she ever had heard against her, and unite with her brother to make her lot a happy one.

"John is so good a man," she said to Miss Letitia Ferguson, "that I am sure Lillie cannot but become a good woman."

So Grace adorned the wedding with her presence, in an elegant Parisian dress, ordered for the occasion, and presented the young bride with a set of pearl and amethyst that was perfectly bewitching, and kisses and notes of affection had been exchanged between them; and during various intervals, and for weeks past, Grace had been pleasantly employed in preparing the family mansion to receive the new mistress.

John's bachelor apartments had been new furnished and furbished, and made into a perfect bower of roses. The rest of the house, after the usual household process of purification, had been rearranged, as John and his sister had always kept it since their mother's death in the way that she loved to see it. There was something quaint and sweet and antique about it that suited Grace. Its unfashionable difference from the smart, flippant, stereotyped rooms of to-day had a charm in her eyes.

Lillie, however, surveyed the scene, the first night that she took possession, with a quiet determination to remodernize on the very earliest opportunity. What would Mrs. Frippit and Mrs. Nippit say to such rooms, she

thought. But then there was time enough to attend to that. Not a shade of these internal reflections was visible in her manner. She said, "Oh, how sweet! How perfectly charming! How splendid!" in all proper places, and John was delighted. She also fell into the arms of Grace, and kissed her with effusion; and John saw the sisterly union, which he had anticipated, auspiciously commencing.

The only trouble in Grace's mind was from a terrible sort of clairvoyance that seems to beset very sincere people, and makes them sensitive to the presence of anything unreal or untrue. Fair and soft and caressing as the new sister was, and determined as Grace was to believe in her, and trust her, and like her, she found an invisible, chilly barrier between her heart and Lillie. She scolded herself and, in the effort to confide, became unnaturally demonstrative, and said and did more than was her wont to show affection; and yet, to her own mortification, she found herself, after all, seeming to herself to be hypocritical, and professing more than she felt.

As to the fair Lillie, who, as we have remarked, was no fool, she took the measure of her new sister with that instinctive knowledge of character which is the essence of womanhood. Lillie was not in love with John, because that was an experience she was not capable of. But she had married him, and now considered him as her property, her subject, — hers, with an intensity of ownership that should shut out all former proprietors.

We have heard much talk, of late, concerning the husband's ownership of the wife. But, dear ladies, is that any more pronounced a fact than every wife's ownership of her husband? — an ownership so intense and pervading that it may be said to be the controlling nerve of womanhood. Let any one touch your right to the first place in your husband's regard, and see!

Well, then, Lillie saw at a glance just what Grace was, and what her influence with her brother must be; and also that, in order to live the life she meditated, John must act under her sway, and not under his sister's; and so the resolve had gone forth, in her mind, that Grace's dominion in the family should come to an end, and that she would, as sole empress, reconstruct the state. But, of course, she was too wise to say a word about it.

"Dear me!" she said, the next morning, when Grace proposed showing her through the house and delivering up the keys, "I 'm sure I don't see why you want to show things to me. I 'm nothing of a housekeeper, you know; all I know is what I want, and I 've always had what I wanted, you know; but, you see, I have n't the least idea how it 's to be done. Why, at home I 've been everybody's baby. Mamma laughs at the idea of my knowing anything. So, Grace dear, you must just be prime minister; and I 'll be the good-for-nothing queen, and just sign the papers, and all that, you know."

Grace found, the first week, that to be housekeeper to a young duchess, in an American village and with American servants, was no sinecure. The young mistress, the next week, tumbled into the wash an amount of muslin and lace and French puffing and fluting sufficient to employ two artists for two or three days, and by which honest Bridget, as she stood at her family wash-tub, was sorely perplexed. But in America no woman ever dies for want of speaking her mind; and the lower orders have their turn in teaching the catechism to their superiors, which they do with an effectiveness that does credit to democracy.

"And would ye be plased to step here, Miss Saymour," said Bridget to Grace in a voice of suppressed emotion, and pointing oratorically, with her soapy right arm, to a snow-wreath of French finery and puffing on the floor. "What *I* asks, Miss Grace, is, *Who* is to do all this?

I 'm sure it would take me and Katy a week, workin' day and night, let alone the cookin' and the silver and the beds, and all them. It 's a pity, now, somebody should n't spake to that young crather; fur she 's nothin' but a baby, and likely don't know anything, as ladies mostly don't, about what 's right and proper." Bridget's Christian charity and condescension in this last sentence was some mitigation of the crisis; but still Grace was appalled. We all of us, my dear sisters, have stood appalled at the tribunal of good Bridgets rising in their majesty and declaring their ultimatum.

Bridget was a treasure in the town of Springdale, where servants were scarce and poor; and, what was more, she was a treasure that knew her own worth. Grace knew very well how she had been beset with applications and offers of higher wages to draw her to various hotels and boarding-houses in the vicinity, but had preferred the comparative dignity and tranquillity of a private gentleman's family. But the family had been small, orderly, and systematic, and Grace the most considerate of housekeepers. Still, it was not to be denied that, though an indulgent and considerate mistress, Bridget was, in fact, mistress of the Seymour mansion, and that her mind and will concerning the washing must be made known to the young queen.

It was a sore trial to speak to Lillie; but it would be sorer to be left at once desolate in the kitchen department, and exposed to the marauding inroads of unskilled Hibernians. In the most delicate way, Grace made Lillie acquainted with the domestic crisis; as, in old times, a prime minister might have carried to one of the Charleses the remonstrance and protest of the House of Commons.

"Oh! I 'm sure I don't know how it 's to be done," said Lillie gayly. "Mamma always got my things done somehow. They always were done, and always must be:

you just tell her so. I think it 's always best to be decided with servants. Face 'em down in the beginning."

"But you see, Lillie dear, it 's almost impossible to get servants at all in Springdale; and such servants as ours everybody says are an exception. If we talk to Bridget in that way, she 'll just go off and leave us; and then what shall we do?"

"What in the world does John want to live in such a place for?" said Lillie peevishly. "There are plenty of servants to be got in New York; and that 's the only place fit to live in. Well, it 's no affair of mine! Tell John he married me, and must take care of me. He must settle it some way; I sha'n't trouble my head about it."

The idea of living in New York, and uprooting the old, time-honored establishment in Springdale, struck Grace as a sort of sacrilege; yet she could not help feeling, with a kind of fear, that the young mistress had power to do it. "Don't, darling, talk so, for pity's sake," she said. "I will go to John, and we will arrange it somehow."

A long consultation with faithful John, in the evening, revealed to him the perplexing nature of the material processes necessary to get up his fair puff of thistle-down in all that wonderful whiteness and fancifulness of costume which had so entranced him. Lillie cried, and said she never had any trouble before about "getting her things done." She was sure mamma or Trixie or somebody did them, or got them done, — she never knew how or when. With many tears and sobs, she protested her ardent desire to realize the Scriptural idea of the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, which were fed and clothed, "like Solomon in all his glory," without ever giving a moment's care to the matter.

John kissed and embraced, and wiped away her tears, and declared she should have everything just as she desired it, if it took the half of his kingdom. After consoling his

fair one, he burst into Grace's room in the evening, just at the hour when they used to have their old brotherly and sisterly confidential talks.

"You see, Grace, — poor Lillie, dear little thing, — you don't know how distressed she is; and, Grace, we must find somebody to do up all her fol-de-rols and fizgigs for her, you know. You see, she 's been used to this kind of thing; can't do without it."

"Well, I 'll try to-morrow, John," said Grace patiently. "There is Mrs. Atkins, — she is a very nice woman."

"Oh, exactly! just the thing," said John. "Yes, we 'll get her to take all Lillie's things every week. That settles it."

"Do you know, John, at the prices that Mrs. Atkins asks, you will have to pay more than for all your family service together? What we have this week would be twenty dollars, at the least computation; and it is worth it, too, — the work of getting up is so elaborate."

John opened his eyes and looked grave. Like all stable New England families, the Seymours, while they practiced the broadest liberality, had instincts of great sobriety in expense. Needless profusion shocked them as out of taste; and a quiet and decent reticence in matters of self-indulgence was habitual with them. Such a price for the fine linen of his little angel rather staggered him, but he gulped it down.

"Well, well, Gracie," he said, "cost what it may, she must have it as she likes it. The little creature, you see, has never been accustomed to calculate or reflect in these matters; and it is trial enough to come down to our stupid way of living, — so different, you know, from the gay life she has been leading."

Miss Seymour's saintship was somewhat rudely tested by this remark. That anybody should think it a sacrifice to be John's wife, and a trial to accept the homestead at

Springdale, with all its tranquillity and comforts, — that John, under her influence, should speak of the Springdale life as stupid, — was a little drop too much in her cup. A bright streak appeared in either cheek as she said: —

"Well, John, I never knew you found Springdale stupid before. I 'm sure, we *have* been happy here," — and her voice quavered.

"Pshaw, Gracie! you know what I mean. I don't mean that *I* find it stupid. I don't like the kind of rattle-brained life we 've been leading this six weeks. But then, it just suits Lillie; and it 's so sweet and patient of her to come here and give it all up, and say not a word of regret; and then, you see, I shall be just up to my ears in business now, and can't give up all my time to her, as I have. There 's ever so much law business coming on, and all the factory matters at Spindlewood; and I can see that Lillie will have rather a hard time of it. You must devote yourself to her, Gracie, like a dear, good soul, as you always were, and try to get her interested in our kind of life. Of course, all our set will call, and that will be something; and then — there will be some invitations out."

"Oh yes, John! we 'll manage it," said Grace, who had by this time swallowed her anger, and shouldered her cross once more with a womanly perseverance. "Oh yes! the Fergusons and the Wilcoxes and the Lennoxes will all call; and we shall have picnics and lawn teas and musicals and parties."

"Yes, yes, I see," said John. "Gracie, isn't she a dear little thing? Didn't she look cunning in that white wrapper this morning? How do women do those things? I wonder," said John. "Don't you think her manners are lovely?"

"They are very sweet, and she is charmingly pretty," said Grace, "and I love her dearly."

"And so affectionate! Don't you think so?" continued John. "She 's a person that you can do anything with through her heart. She 's all heart and very little head. I ought not to say that, either. I think she has fair natural abilities, had they ever been cultivated."

"My dear John," said Grace, "you forget what time it is. Good-night!"

CHAPTER VII

WILL SHE LIKE IT

"JOHN," said Grace, "when are you going out again to our Sunday-school at Spindlewood? They are all asking after you. Do you know it is now two months since they have seen you?"

"I know it," said John. "I am going to-morrow. You see, Gracie, I could n't well before."

"Oh! I have told them all about it, and I have kept things up; but then there are so many who want to see *you*, and so many things that you alone could settle and manage."

"Oh yes! I 'll go to-morrow," said John. "And after this, I shall be steady at it. I wonder if we could get Lillie to go," said he doubtfully.

Grace did not answer. Lillie was a subject on which it was always embarrassing to her to be appealed to. She was so afraid of appearing jealous or unappreciative; and her opinions were so different from those of her brother that it was rather difficult to say anything.

"Do you think she would like it, Grace?"

"Indeed, John, you must know better than I. If anybody could make her take an interest in it, it would be you."

Before his marriage, John had always had the idea that pretty, affectionate little women were religious and self-denying at heart, as matters of course. No matter through what labyrinths of fashionable follies and dissipation they had been wandering, still a talent for saintship was lying

dormant in their natures, which it needed only the touch of love to develop. The wings of the angel were always concealed under the fashionable attire of the belle, and would unfold themselves when the hour came. A nearer acquaintance with Lillie, he was forced to confess, had not, so far, confirmed this idea. Though hers was a face so fair and pure that, when he first knew her, it suggested ideas of prayer, and communion with angels, yet he could not disguise from himself that, in all near acquaintance with her, she had proved to be most remarkably "of the earth, earthy." She was alive and fervent about fashionable gossip, — of who is who, and what does what; she was alive to equipages, to dress, to sight-seeing, to dancing, to anything of which the whole stimulus and excitement was earthly and physical. At times, too, he remembered that she had talked a sort of pensive sentimentalism, of a slightly religious nature; but the least idea of a moral purpose in life — of self-denial, and devotion to something higher than immediate self-gratification — seemed never to have entered her head. What is more, John had found his attempts to introduce such topics with her always unsuccessful. Lillie either gaped in his face and asked him what time it was, or playfully pulled his whiskers and asked him why he did n't take to the ministry, or adroitly turned the conversation with kissing and compliments.

Sunday morning came, shining down gloriously through the dewy elm arches of Springdale. The green turf on either side of the wide streets was mottled and flecked with vivid flashes and glimmers of emerald, like the sheen of a changeable silk, as here and there long arrows of sunlight darted down through the leaves and touched the ground. The gardens between the great shady houses that flanked the street were full of tall white and crimson phloxes in all the majesty of their summer bloom, and the air was filled with fragrance; and Lillie, after a two hours'

toilet, came forth from her chamber fresh and lovely as the bride in the Canticles. "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." She was killingly dressed in the rural-simplicity style. All her robes and sashes were of purest white; and a knot of field daisies and grasses, with French dewdrops on them, twinkled in an infinitesimal bonnet on her little head, and her hair was all craped into a filmy golden aureole round her face. In short, dear reader, she was a perfectly got-up angel, and wanted only some tulle clouds and an opening heaven to have gone up at once, as similar angels do from the Parisian stage.

"You like me, don't you?" she said, as she saw the delight in John's eyes.

John was tempted to lay hold of his plaything.

"Don't, now, — you 'll crumple me," she said, fighting him off with a dainty parasol. "Positively, you sha'n't touch me till after church."

John laid the little white hand on his arm with pride, and looked down at her over his shoulder all the way to church. He felt proud of her. They would look at her, and see how pretty she was, he thought. And so they did. Lillie had been used to admiration in church. It was one of her fields of triumph. She had received compliments on her toilet even from young clergymen, who, in the course of their preaching and praying, found leisure to observe the beauties of nature and grace in their congregation. She had been quite used to knowing of young men who got good seats in church simply for the purpose of seeing her; consequently, going to church had not the moral advantages for her that it has for people who go simply to pray and be instructed. John saw the turning of heads, and the little movements and whispers of admiration; and his heart was glad within him. The thought of her mingled with prayer and hymn; even when he closed his eyes and bowed his head, she was there. Per-

haps this was not exactly as it should be; yet let us hope the angels look tenderly down on the sins of too much love. John felt as if he would be glad of a chance to die for her; and when he thought of her in his prayers, it was because he loved her better than himself.

As to Lillie, there was an extraordinary sympathy of sentiment between them at that moment. John was thinking only of her; and she was thinking only of herself, as was her usual habit, — herself, the one object of her life, the one idol of her love. Not that she knew, in so many words, that she, the little, frail bit of dust and ashes that she was, was her own idol, and that she appeared before her Maker, in those solemn walls, to draw to herself the homage and the attention that was due to God alone; but yet it was true that, for years and years, Lillie's unconfessed yet only motive for appearing in church had been the display of herself and the winning of admiration.

But is she so much worse than others? — than the clergyman who uses the pulpit and the sacred office to show off his talents? — than the singers who sing God's praises to show their voices, — who intone the agonies of their Redeemer, or the glories of the Te Deum, confident of the comments of the newspaper press on their performance the next week? No: Lillie may be a little sinner, but not above others in this matter.

"Lillie," said John to her after dinner, assuming a careless, matter-of-course air, "would you like to drive with me over to Spindlewood and see my Sunday-school?"

"*Your* Sunday-school, John? Why, bless me! do *you* teach Sunday-school?"

"Certainly I do. Grace and I have a school of two hundred children and young people belonging to our factories. I am superintendent."

"I never did hear of anything so odd!" said Lillie. "What in the world can you want to take all that trouble

for, — go basking over there in the hot sun, and be shut up with a room full of those ill-smelling factory people? Why, I 'm sure it can't be your duty! I would n't do it for the world. Nothing would tempt me. Why, gracious, John, you might catch smallpox or something!"

"Pooh! Lillie, child, you don't know anything about them. They are just as cleanly and respectable as anybody."

"Oh, well! they may be. But these Irish and Germans and Swedes and Danes, and all that low class, do smell so, — you need n't tell me, now! — that working-class smell is a thing that can't be disguised."

"But, Lillie, these are our people. They are the laborers from whose toil our wealth comes; and we owe them something."

"Well! you pay them something, don't you?"

"I mean morally. We owe our efforts to instruct their children, and to elevate and guide them. Lillie, I feel that it is wrong for us to use wealth merely as a means of self-gratification. We ought to labor for those who labor for us. We ought to deny ourselves, and make some sacrifices of ease for their good."

"You dear old preachy creature!" said Lillie. "How good you must be! But, really, I have n't the smallest vocation to be a missionary, — not the smallest. I can't think of anything that would induce me to take a long, hot ride in the sun, and to sit in that stived-up room with those common creatures."

John looked grave. "Lillie," he said, "you should n't speak of any of your fellow beings in that heartless way."

"Well, now, if you are going to scold me, I 'm sure I don't want to go. I 'm sure, if everybody that stays at home, and has comfortable times, Sundays, instead of going out on missions, is heartless, there are a good many heartless people in the world."

"I beg your pardon, my darling. I did n't mean, dear, that you were heartless, but that what you said sounded so. I knew you did n't really mean it. I did n't ask you, dear, to go to work, — only to be company for me."

"And I ask you to stay at home, and be company for me. I 'm sure it is lonesome enough here, and you are off on business almost all your days; and you might stay with me Sundays. You could hire some poor, pious young man to do all the work over there. There are plenty of them, dear knows, that it would be a real charity to help, and that could preach and pray better than you can, I know. I don't think a man that is busy all the week ought to work Sundays. It is breaking the Sabbath."

"But, Lillie, I am interested in my Sunday-school. I know all my people, and they know me; and no one else in the world could do for them what I could."

"Well, I should think you might be interested in me: nobody else can do for me what you can, and I want you to stay with me. That 's just the way with you men: you don't care anything about us after you get us."

"Now, Lillie, darling, you know that is n't so."

"It 's just so. You care more for your old missionary work, now, than you do for me. I 'm sure I never knew that I 'd married a home missionary."

"Darling, please, now, don't laugh at me, and try to make me selfish and worldly. You have such power over me, you ought to be my inspiration."

"I 'll be your common sense, John. When you get on stilts, and run benevolence into the ground, I 'll pull you down. Now, I know it must be bad for a man, that has as much as you do to occupy his mind all the week, to go out and work Sundays; and it 's foolish, when you could perfectly well hire somebody else to do it, and stay at home, and have a good time."

"But, Lillie, I need it myself."

"Need it, — what for? I can't imagine."

"To keep me from becoming a mere selfish, worldly man, and living for mere material good and pleasure."

"You dear old Don Quixote! Well, you are altogether in the clouds above me. I can't understand a word of all that."

"Well, good-by, darling," said John, kissing her, and hastening out of the room, to cut short the interview.

Milton has described the peculiar influence of woman over man, in lowering his moral tone, and bringing him down to what he considered the peculiarly womanly level. "You women," he said to his wife, when she tried to induce him to seek favors at court by some concession of principle, — "you women never care for anything but to be fine, and to ride in your coaches." In Father Adam's description of the original Eve, he says: —

> "All higher knowledge in her presence falls
> Degraded; wisdom, in discourse with her,
> Loses, discountenanced, and like folly shows."

Something like this effect was always produced on John's mind when he tried to settle questions relating to his higher nature with Lillie. He seemed, somehow, always to get the worst of it. All her womanly graces and fascinations, so powerful over his senses and imagination, arrayed themselves formidably against him, and for the time seemed to strike him dumb. What he believed, and believed with enthusiasm, when he was alone or with Grace, seemed to drizzle away, and be belittled, when he undertook to convince her of it. Lest John should be called a muff and a spoon for this peculiarity, we cite once more the high authority aforesaid, where Milton makes poor Adam tell the angel: —

> "Yet when I approach
> Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
> And in herself complete, so well to know
> Her own, that what she wills to do or say
> Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best."

John went out from Lillie's presence rather humbled and overcrowed. When the woman that a man loves laughs at his moral enthusiasms, it is like a black frost on the delicate tips of budding trees. It is uphill work, as we all know, to battle with indolence and selfishness and self-seeking and hard-hearted worldliness. Then the highest and holiest part of our nature has a bashfulness of its own. It is a heavenly stranger, and easily shamed. A nimble-tongued, skillful woman can so easily show the ridiculous side of what seemed heroism; and what is called common sense, so generally, is only some neatly put phase of selfishness. Poor John needed the angel at his elbow, to give him the caution which he is represented as giving to Father Adam: —

> "What transports thee so?
> An outside? — fair, no doubt, and worthy well
> Thy cherishing, thy honor, and thy love,
> Not thy subjection. Weigh her with thyself,
> Then value. Oft-times nothing profits more
> Than self-esteem, grounded on just and right
> Well managed: of that skill the more thou knowest,
> The more she will acknowledge thee her head,
> And to realities yield all her shows."

But John had no angel at his elbow. He was a fellow with a great heart, — good as gold, — with upward aspirations, but with slow speech; and when not sympathized with, he became confused and incoherent, and even dumb. So his only way with his little pink and white empress was immediate and precipitate flight.

Lillie ran to the window when he was gone, and saw him and Grace get into the carriage together; and then she saw them drive to the old Ferguson house, and Rose Ferguson came out and got in with them. "Well," she said to herself, "he sha'n't do that many times more, — I 'm resolved."

No, she did not say it. It would be well for us all if we did put into words, plain and explicit, many instinctive

resolves and purposes that arise in our hearts, and which, for want of being so expressed, influence us undetected and unchallenged. If we would say out boldly, "I don't care for right or wrong, or good or evil, or anybody's rights or anybody's happiness, or the general good, or God himself, — all I care for, or feel the least interest in, is to have a good time myself, and I mean to do it, come what may," — we should be only expressing a feeling which often lies in the dark back room of the human heart; and saying it might alarm us from the drugged sleep of life. It might rouse us to shake off the slow, creeping paralysis of selfishness and sin before it is forever too late.

But Lillie was a creature who had lost the power of self-knowledge. She was, my dear sir, what you suppose the true woman to be, — a bundle of blind instincts; and among these the strongest was that of property in her husband, and power over him. She had lived in her power over men; it was her field of ambition. She knew them thoroughly. Women are called ivy; and the ivy has a hundred little fingers in every inch of its length, that strike at every flaw and crack and weak place in the strong wall they mean to overgrow; and so had Lillie. She saw, at a glance, that the sober, thoughtful, Christian life of Springdale was wholly opposed to the life she wanted to lead, and in which John was to be her instrument. She saw that, if such women as Grace and Rose had power with him, she should not have; and her husband should be hers alone. He should do her will, and be her subject, — so she thought, smiling at herself as she looked in the looking-glass, and then curled herself peacefully and languidly down in the corner of the sofa, and drew forth the French novel that was her usual Sunday companion.

Lillie liked French novels. There was an atmosphere of things in them that suited her. The young married women had lovers and admirers; and there was the con-

stant stimulus of being courted and adored, under the safe protection of a good-natured *mari.*

In France, the flirting is all done after marriage, and the young girl looks forward to it as her introduction to a career of conquest. In America, so great is our democratic liberality, that we think of uniting the two systems. We are getting on in that way fast. A knowledge of French is beginning to be considered as the pearl of great price, to gain which all else must be sold. The girls must go to the French theatre, and be stared at by French *débauchés,* who laugh at them while they pretend they understand what, thank Heaven, they cannot. Then we are to have series of French novels, carefully translated, and puffed and praised even by the religious press, written by the corps of French female reformers, which will show them exactly how the naughty Frenchwomen manage their cards; so that, by and by, we shall have the latest phase of eclecticism, — the union of American and French manners. The girl will flirt till twenty *à l'Américaine,* and then marry and flirt till forty *à la Française.* This was about Lillie's plan of life. Could she hope to carry it out in Springdale?

CHAPTER VIII

SPINDLEWOOD

It seemed a little like old times to Grace to be once more going with Rose and John over the pretty romantic road to Spindlewood. John did not reflect upon how little she now saw of him, and how much of a trial the separation was; but he noticed how bright and almost gay she was when they were by themselves once more. He was gay too. In the congenial atmosphere of sympathy, his confidence in himself, and his own right in the little controversy that had occurred, returned. Not that he said a word of it; he did not do so, and would not have done so for the world. Grace and Rose were full of anecdotes of this, that, and the other of their scholars; and all the particulars of some of their new movements were discussed. The people had, of their own accord, raised a subscription for a library, which was to be presented to John that day, with a request that he would select the books.

"Gracie, that must be your work," said John; "you know I shall have an important case next week."

"Oh yes! Rose and I will settle it," said Grace. "Rose, we 'll get the catalogues from all the bookstores, and mark the things."

"We 'll want books for the children just beginning to read; and then books for the young men in John's Bible class, and all the way between," said Rose. "It will be quite a work to select."

"And then to bargain with the bookstores, and make the money go 'far as possible,' " said Grace.

"And then there 'll be the covering of the books," said Rose. "I 'll tell you. I think I 'll manage to have a lawn tea at our house; and the girls shall all come early, and get the books covered, — that 'll be charming."

"I think Lillie would like that," put in John.

"I should be so glad!" said Rose. "What a lovely little thing she is! I hope she 'll like it. I wanted to get up something pretty for her. I think, at this time of the year, lawn teas are a little variety."

"Oh, she 'll like it of course!" said John, with some sinking of heart about the Sunday-school books.

There were so many pressing to shake hands with John, and congratulate him, so many histories to tell, so many cases presented for consultation, that it was quite late before they got away; and tea had been waiting for them more than an hour when they returned. Lillie looked pensive, and had that indescribable air of patient martyrdom which some women know how to make so very effective. Lillie had good general knowledge of the science of martyrdom, — a little spice and flavor of it had been gently infused at times into her demeanor ever since she had been at Springdale. She could do the uncomplaining sufferer with the happiest effect. She contrived to insinuate at times how she did n't complain, — how dull and slow she found her life, and yet how she endeavored to be cheerful.

"I know," she said to John when they were by themselves, "that you and Grace both think I 'm a horrid creature."

"Why, no, dearest; indeed we don't."

"But you do, though; oh, I feel it! The fact is, John, I have n't a particle of constitution; and if I should try to go on as Grace does, it would kill me in a month. Ma never would let me try to do anything; and if I did, I was sure to break all down under it; but if you say so, I 'll try to go into this school."

"Oh no, Lillie! I don't want you to go in. I know, darling, you could not stand any fatigue. I only wanted you to take an interest, — just to go and see them for my sake."

"Well, John, if you must go, and must keep it up, I must try to go. I'll go with you next Sunday. It will make my head ache perhaps; but no matter, if you wish it. You don't think badly of me, do you?" she said coaxingly, playing with his whiskers.

"No, darling, not the least."

"I suppose it would be a great deal better for you if you had married a strong, energetic woman, like your sister. I do admire her so; but it discourages me."

"Darling, I'd a thousand times rather have you what you are," said John; "for —

> 'What she wills to do
> Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.'

"Oh, John! come, you ought to be sincere."

"Sincere, Lillie! I am sincere."

"You really would rather have poor, poor little me than a woman like Gracie, — a great, strong, energetic woman?" And Lillie laid her soft cheek down on his arm in pensive humility.

"Yes, a thousand million times," said John in his enthusiasm, catching her in his arms and kissing her. "I would n't for the world have you anything but the darling little Lillie you are. I love your faults more than the virtues of other women. You are a thousand times better than I am. I am a great, coarse blockhead, compared to you. I hope I did n't hurt your feelings this noon; you know, Lillie, I'm hasty, and apt to be inconsiderate. I don't really know that I ought to let you go over next Sunday."

"Oh, John, you are so good! Certainly if you go I ought to; and I shall try my best." Then John told her

all about the books and the lawn tea, and Lillie listened approvingly.

So they had a lawn tea at the Fergusons that week, where Lillie was the cynosure of all eyes. Mr. Mathews, the new young clergyman of Springdale, was there. Mr. Mathews had been credited as one of the admirers of Rose Ferguson; but on this occasion he promenaded and talked with Lillie, and Lillie alone, with an exclusive devotion.

"What a lovely young creature your new sister is!" he said to Grace. "She seems to have so much religious sensibility."

"I say, Lillie," said John, "Mathews seemed to be smitten with you. I had a notion of interfering."

"Did you ever see anything like it, John? I could n't shake the creature off. I was so thankful when you came up and took me. He 's Rose's admirer, and he hardly spoke a word to her. I think it 's shameful."

The next Sunday Lillie rode over to Spindlewood with John and Rose and Mr. Mathews. Never had the picturesque of religion received more lustre than from her presence. John was delighted to see how they all gazed at her and wondered. Lillie looked like a first-rate French picture of the youthful Madonna, — white, pure, and patient. The day was hot and the hall crowded; and John noticed, what he never did before, the close smell and confined air, and it made him uneasy. When we are feeling with the nerves of some one else, we notice every roughness and inconvenience. John thought he had never seen his school appear so little to advantage. Yet Lillie was an image of patient endurance, trying to be pleased; and John thought her, as she sat and did nothing, more of a saint than Rose and Grace, who were laboriously sorting books, and gathering around them large classes of factory boys, to whom they talked with an exhausting devotedness. When all was over, Lillie sat back on the carriage cushions, and smelled at her gold vinaigrette.

"You are all worn out, dear," said John tenderly.

"It 's no matter," she said faintly.

"Oh, Lillie darling! does your head ache?"

"A little, — you know it was close in there. I 'm very sensitive to such things. I don't think they affect others as they do me," said Lillie, with the voice of a dying zephyr.

"Lillie, it is not your duty to go," said John; "if you are not made ill by this, I never will take you again; you are too precious to be risked."

"How can you say so, John? I 'm a poor little creature, — no use to anybody."

Hereupon John told her that her only use in life was to be lovely and to be loved, — that a thing of beauty was a joy forever, etc., etc. But Lillie was too much exhausted, on her return, to appear at the tea-table. She took to her bed at once with sick headache, to the poignant remorse of John. "You see how it is, Gracie," he said. "Poor dear little thing, she is willing enough, but there 's nothing of her. We must n't allow her to exert herself; her feelings always carry her away."

The next Sunday John sat at home with Lillie, who found herself too unwell to go to church, and was in a state of such low spirits as to require constant soothing to keep her quiet.

"It is fortunate that I have you and Rose to trust the school with," said John; "you see, it 's my first duty to take care of Lillie."

CHAPTER IX

A CRISIS

One of the shrewdest and most subtle modern French writers has given his views of womankind in the following passage: —

"There are few women who have not found themselves, at least once in their lives, in regard to some incontestable fact, faced down by precise, keen, searching inquiry, — one of those questions pitilessly put by their husbands, the very idea of which gives a slight chill, and the first word of which enters the heart like a stroke of a dagger. Hence comes the maxim, *Every woman lies* — obliging lies — venial lies — sublime lies — horrible lies — but always the obligation of lying.

"This obligation once admitted, must it not be a necessity to know how to lie well? In France the women lie admirably. Our customs instruct them so well in imposture. And woman is so naïvely impertinent, so pretty, so graceful, so true, in her lying! They so well understand its usefulness in social life for avoiding those violent shocks which would destroy happiness, — it is like the cotton in which they pack their jewelry.

"Lying is to them the very foundation of language, and truth is only the exception; they speak it, as they are virtuous, from caprice or for a purpose. According to their character, some women laugh when they lie, and some cry; some become grave, and others get angry. Having begun life by pretending perfect insensibility to that homage which flatters them most, they often finish by

lying even to themselves. Who has not admired their apparent superiority and calm, at the moment when they were trembling for the mysterious treasures of their love? Who has not studied their ease and facility, their presence of mind in the midst of the most critical embarrassments of social life? There is nothing awkward about it; their deception flows as softly as the snow falls from heaven.

"Yet there are men that have the presumption to expect to get the better of the Parisian woman! — of the woman who possesses thirty-seven thousand ways of saying 'No,' and incommensurable variations in saying 'Yes.'"

This is a Frenchman's view of life in a country where women are trained more systematically for the mere purposes of attraction than in any other country, and where the pursuit of admiration and the excitement of winning lovers are represented by its authors as constituting the main staple of woman's existence. France, unfortunately, is becoming the great society-teacher of the world. What with French theatres, French operas, French novels, and the universal rush of American women for travel, France is becoming so powerful in American fashionable society, that the things said of the Parisian woman begin in some cases to apply to some women in America.

Lillie was as precisely the woman here described as if she had been born and bred in Paris. She had all the thirty-seven thousand ways of saying "No," and the incommensurable variations in saying "Yes," as completely as the best French teaching could have given it. She possessed, and had used, all that graceful facility in the story of herself that she had told John in the days of courtship. Her power over him was based on a dangerous foundation of unreality. Hence, during the first few weeks of her wedded life, came a critical scene, in which she was brought in collision with one of those "pitiless questions" our author speaks of.

Her wedding presents, manifold and brilliant, had remained at home, in the charge of her mother, during the wedding journey. One bright day, a few weeks after her arrival in Springdale, the boxes containing the treasures were landed there; and John, with all enthusiasm, busied himself with the work of unpacking these boxes, and drawing forth the treasures.

Now, it so happened that Lillie's maternal grandfather, a nice, pious old gentleman, had taken the occasion to make her the edifying and suggestive present of a large, elegantly bound family Bible. The binding was unexceptionable; and Lillie assigned it a proper place of honor among her wedding gear. Alas, she had not looked into it, nor seen what dangers to her power were lodged between its leaves. But John, who was curious in the matter of books, sat quietly down in a corner to examine it; and on the middle page, under the head "Family Record," he found, in a large, bold hand, the date of the birth of "Lillie Ellis" in figures of the most uncompromising plainness; and thence, with one flash of his well-trained arithmetical sense, came the perception that, instead of being twenty years old, she was in fact twenty-seven, — and that of course she had lied to him.

It was a horrid and a hard word for an American young man to have suggested in relation to his wife. If we may believe the French romancer, a Frenchman would simply have smiled in amusement on detecting this petty feminine ruse of his beloved. But American men are in the habit of expecting the truth from respectable women as a matter of course; and the want of it in the smallest degree strikes them as shocking. Only an Englishman or an American can understand the dreadful pain of that discovery to John.

The Anglo-Saxon race have, so to speak, a worship of truth; and they hate and abhor lying with an energy which leaves no power of tolerance. The Celtic races

have a certain sympathy with deception. They have a certain appreciation of the value of lying as a fine art, which has never been more skillfully shown than in the passage from De Balzac we have quoted. The woman who is described by him as lying so sweetly and skillfully is represented as one of those women "qui ont je ne sais quoi de saint et de sacré, qui inspirent tant de respect que l'amour," — "a woman who has an indescribable something of holiness and purity which inspires respect as well as love." It was no detraction from the character of Jesus, according to the estimate of Renan, to represent him as consenting to a benevolent fraud, and seeming to work miracles when he did not work them, by way of increasing his good influence over the multitude.

But John was the offspring of a generation of men for hundreds of years who would any of them have gone to the stake rather than have told the smallest untruth; and for him who had been watched and guarded and catechised against this sin from his cradle, till he was as true and pure as a crystal rock, to have his faith shattered in the woman he loved, was a terrible thing.

As he read the fatal figures, a mist swam before his eyes, — a sort of faintness came over him. It seemed for a moment as if his very life was sinking down through his boots into the carpet. He threw down the book hastily, and turning, stepped through an open window into the garden, and walked quickly off.

"Where in the world is John going?" said Lillie, running to the door, and calling after him in imperative tones. "John, John, come back. I have n't done with you yet;" but John never turned his head. "How very odd! what in the world is the matter with him?" she said to herself.

John was gone all the afternoon. He took a long, long walk, all by himself, and thought the matter over. He remembered that fresh, childlike, almost infantine face,

that looked up into his with such a bewitching air of frankness and candor, as she professed to be telling all about herself and her history; and now which or what of it was true? It seemed as if he loathed her; and yet he could n't help loving her, while he despised himself for doing it. When he came home to supper, he was silent and morose. Lillie came running to meet him; but he threw her off, saying he was tired. She was frightened; she had never seen him look like that.

"John, what is the matter with you?" said Grace at the tea-table. "You are upsetting everything, and don't drink your tea."

"Nothing — only — I have some troublesome business to settle," he said, getting up to go out again. "You need n't wait for me; I shall be out late."

"What can be the matter?"

Lillie, indeed, had not the remotest idea. Yet she remembered his jumping up suddenly, and throwing down the Bible; and mechanically she went to it, and opened it. She turned it over; and the record met her eye. "Provoking!" she said. "Stupid old creature! must needs go and put that out in full." Lillie took a paper-folder, and cut the leaf out quite neatly; then folded and burned it.

She knew now what was the matter. John was angry at her; but she could n't help wondering that he should be so angry. If he had laughed at her, teased her, taxed her with the trick, she would have understood what to do. But this terrible gloom, this awful commotion of the elements, frightened her.

She went to her room, saying that she had a headache, and would go to bed. But she did not. She took her French novel, and read till she heard him coming; and then she threw down her book, and began to cry. He came into the room, and saw her leaning like a little white snow-wreath over the table, sobbing as if her heart would

break. To do her justice, Lillie's sobs were not affected. She was lonesome and thoroughly frightened; and when she heard him coming, her nerves gave out. John's heart yearned towards her. His short-lived anger had burned out, and he was perfectly longing for a reconciliation. He felt as if he must have her to love, no matter what she was. He came up to her, and stroked her hair. "Oh, Lillie!" he said, "why couldn't you have told me the truth? What made you deceive me?"

"I was afraid you wouldn't like me if I did," said Lillie in her sobs.

"Oh, Lillie! I should have liked you, no matter how old you were, — only you should have told me the truth."

"I know it — I know it — oh, it was wrong of me!" and Lillie sobbed, and seemed in danger of falling into convulsions; and John's heart gave out. He gathered her in his arms. "I can't help loving you; and I can't live without you," he said, "be you what you may!"

Lillie's little heart beat with triumph under all her sobs: she had got him, and should hold him yet.

"There can be no confidence between husband and wife, Lillie," said John gravely, "unless we are perfectly true with each other. Promise me, dear, that you will never deceive me again."

Lillie promised with ready fervor. "Oh, John!" she said, "I never should have done so wrong if I had only come under your influence earlier. The fact is, I have been under the worst influences all my life. I never had anybody like you to guide me."

John may of course be excused for feeling that his flattering little penitent was more to him than ever; and as to Lillie, she gave a sigh of relief. *That* was over, "anyway;" and she had him not only safe, but more completely hers than before.

A generous man is entirely unnerved by a frank confes-

sion. If Lillie had said one word in defense, if she had raised the slightest shadow of an argument, John would have roused up all his moral principle to oppose her; but this poor little white water-sprite, dissolving in a rain of penitent tears, quite washed away all his anger and all his heroism.

The next morning, Lillie, all fresh in a ravishing toilet, with field daisies in her hair, was in a condition to laugh gently at John for his emotion of yesterday. She triumphed softly, not too obviously, in her power. He could n't do without her, — do what she might, — that was plain. "Now, John," she said, "don't you think we poor women are judged rather hardly? Men, you know, tell all sorts of lies to carry on their great politics and their ambition, and nobody thinks it so dreadful of *them.*"

"I do — I should," interposed John.

"Oh, well! you — you are an exception. It is not one man in a hundred that is so good as you are. Now, we women have only one poor little ambition, — to be pretty, to please you men; and as soon as you know we are getting old, you don't like us. And can you think it 's so very shocking if we don't come square up to the dreadful truth about our age? Youth and beauty is all there is to us, you know."

"Oh, Lillie! don't say so," said John, who felt the necessity of being instructive, and of improving the occasion to elevate the moral tone of his little elf. "Goodness lasts, my dear, when beauty fades."

"Oh, nonsense! Now, John, don't talk humbug. I 'd like to see *you* following goodness when beauty is gone. I 've known lots of plain old maids that were perfect saints and angels; and yet men crowded and jostled by them to get the pretty sinners. I dare say now," she added, with a bewitching look over her shoulder at him, "you 'd rather

have me than Miss Almira Carraway, — had n't you, now?" And Lillie put her white arm round his neck, and her downy cheek to his, and said archly, "Come, now, confess."

Then John told her that she was a bad, naughty girl; and she laughed; and, on the whole, the pair were more hilarious and loving than usual. But yet, when John was away at his office, he thought of it again, and found there was still a sore spot in his heart. She had cheated him once; would she cheat him again? And she could cheat so prettily, so serenely, and with such a candid face, it was a dangerous talent.

No: she was n't like his mother, he thought with a sigh. The "je ne sais quoi de saint et de sacré," which had so captivated his imagination, did not cover the saintly and sacred nature; it was a mere outward purity of complexion and outline. And then Grace, — she must not be left to find out what he knew about Lillie. He had told Grace that she was only twenty, — told it on her authority; and now must he become an accomplice? If called on to speak of his wife's age, must he accommodate the truth to her story, or must he palter and evade? Here was another brick laid on the wall of separation between his sister and himself. It was rising daily. Here was another subject on which he could never speak frankly with Grace; for he must defend Lillie, — every impulse of his heart rushed to protect her.

But it is a terrible truth, and one that it will not hurt any of us to bear in mind, that our judgments of our friends are involuntary. We may long with all our hearts to confide; we may be fascinated, entangled, and wish to be blinded; but blind we cannot be. The friend that has lied to us once, we may long to believe; but we cannot. Nay, more; it is the worse for us, if, in our desire to hold

the dear deceiver in our hearts, we begin to chip and hammer on the great foundations of right and honor, and to say within ourselves, "After all, why be so particular?" Then, when we have searched about for all the reasons and apologies and extenuations for wrong-doing, are we sure that in our human weakness we shall not be pulling down the moral barriers in ourselves? The habit of excusing evil, and finding apologies, and wishing to stand with one who stands on a lower moral plane, is not a wholesome one for the soul.

As fate would have it, the very next day after this little scene, who should walk into the parlor where Lillie, John, and Grace were sitting but that terror of American democracy, the census-taker. Armed with the whole power of the republic, this official steps with elegant ease into the most sacred privacies of the family. Flutterings and denials are in vain. Bridget and Katy and Anne, no less than Seraphina and Isabella, must give up the critical secrets of their lives.

John took the paper into the kitchen. Honest old Bridget gave in her age with effrontery as "twinty-five." Anne giggled and flounced, and declared on her word she did n't know, — they could put it down as they liked. "But, Anne, you must tell, or you may be sent to jail, you know."

Anne giggled still harder, and tossed her head. "Then it 's to jail I 'll have to go, for I don't know."

"Dear me," said Lillie, with an air of edifying candor, "what a fuss they make! Set down my age 'twenty-seven,' John," she added.

Grace started, and looked at John; he met her eye, and blushed to the roots of his hair.

"Why, what 's the matter?" said Lillie, "are you embarrassed at telling your age?"

"Oh, nothing!" said John, writing down the numbers hastily; and then, finding a sudden occasion to give directions in the garden, he darted out.

"It 's so silly to be ashamed of our age!" said Lillie, as the census-taker withdrew.

"Of course," said Grace; and she had the humanity never to allude to the subject with her brother.

CHAPTER X

CHANGES

SCENE. — *A chamber at the Seymour house.*
LILLIE *discovered weeping.* JOHN *rushing in with empressement.*

"LILLIE, you *shall* tell me what ails you."

"Nothing ails me, John."

"Yes, there does; you were crying when I came in."

"Oh, well, that 's nothing!"

"Oh, but it is a great deal! What is the matter? I can see that you are not happy."

"Oh, pshaw, John! I am as happy as I ought to be, I dare say; there is n't much the matter with me, only a little blue, and I don't feel quite strong."

"You don't feel strong! I 've noticed it, Lillie."

"Well, you see, John, the fact is, that I never have got through this month without going to the seaside. Mamma always took me. The doctors told her that my constitution was such that I could n't get along without it; but I dare say I shall do well enough in time, you know."

"But, Lillie," said John, "if you do need sea air, you must go. I can't leave my business; that 's the trouble."

"Oh no, John! don't think of it. I ought to make an effort to get along. You see, it 's very foolish in me, but places affect my spirits so. It 's perfectly absurd how I am affected."

"Well, Lillie, I hope this place does n't affect you unpleasantly," said John.

"It 's a nice, darling place, John, and it 's very silly in me; but it is a fact that this house somehow has a depress-

ing effect on my spirits. You know it's not like the houses I've been used to. It has a sort of old look; and I can't help feeling that it puts me in mind of those who are dead and gone; and then I think I shall be dead and gone too, some day, and it makes me cry so. Isn't it silly of me, John?"

"Poor little pussy!" said John.

"You see, John, our rooms are lovely; but they aren't modern and cheerful, like those I've been accustomed to. They make me feel pensive and sad all the time; but I'm trying to get over it."

"Why, Lillie!" said John, "would you like the rooms refurnished? It can easily be done if you wish it."

"Oh no, no, dear! You are too good; and I'm sure the rooms are lovely, and it would hurt Gracie's feelings to change them. No: I must try and get over it. I know just how silly it is, and I shall try to overcome it. If I had only more strength, I believe I could."

"Well, darling, you must go to the seaside. I shall have you sent right off to Newport. Gracie can go with you."

"Oh no, John! not for the world. Gracie must stay and keep house for you. She's such a help to you that it would be a shame to take her away. But I think mamma would go with me, — if you could take me there, and engage my rooms and all that, why, mamma could stay with me, you know. To be sure, it would be a trial not to have you there; but then if I could get up my strength, you know" —

"Exactly, certainly; and, Lillie, how would you like the parlors arranged if you had your own way?"

"Oh, John! don't think of it."

"But I just want to know for curiosity. Now, how would you have them if you could?"

"Well, then, John, don't you think it would be lovely to have them frescoed? Did you ever see the Follingsbees'

rooms in New York? They were so lovely! — one was all in blue, and the other in crimson, opening into each other; with carved furniture, and those *marqueterie* tables, and all sorts of little French things. They had such a gay and cheerful look."

"Now, Lillie, if you want our rooms like that, you shall have them."

"Oh, John, you are too good! I could n't ask such a sacrifice."

"Oh, pshaw! it is n't a sacrifice. I don't doubt I shall like them better myself. Your taste is perfect, Lillie; and, now I think of it, I wonder that I thought of bringing you here without consulting you in every particular. A woman ought to be queen in her own house, I am sure."

"But Gracie! Now, John, I know she has associations with all the things in this house, and it would be cruel to her," said Lillie, with a sigh.

"Pshaw! Gracie is a good, sensible girl, and ready to make any rational change. I suppose we have been living rather behind the times, and are somewhat rusty, that 's a fact; but Gracie will enjoy new things as much as anybody, I dare say."

"Well, John, since you are set on it, there 's Charlie Ferrola, one of my particular friends; he 's an architect, and does all about arranging rooms and houses and furniture. He did the Follingsbees', and the Hortons', and the Jeromes', and no end of real nobby people's houses, and made them perfectly lovely. People say one would n't know that one was n't in Paris, in houses that he does."

Now, our John was by nature a good solid chip of the old Anglo-Saxon block, and if there was anything that he had no special affinity for, it was for French things. He had small opinion of French morals, and French ways in general; but then at this moment he saw his Lillie, whom, but half an hour before, he found all pale and tear-

drenched, now radiant and joyous, sleek as a humming-bird, with the light in her eyes, and the rattle on the tip of her tongue; and he felt so delighted to see her bright and gay and joyous, that he would have turned his house into the Jardin Mabille, if that were possible.

Lillie had the prettiest little caressing tricks and graces imaginable; and she perched herself on his knee, and laughed and chatted so gayly, and pulled his whiskers so saucily, and then, springing up, began arraying herself in such an astonishing daintiness of device, and fluttering before him with such a variety of well-assorted plumage, that John was quite taken off his feet. He did not care so much whether what she willed to do were "wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best," as feel that what she wished to do must be done at any rate.

"Why, darling!" he said in his rapture; "why did n't you tell me all this before? Here you have been growing sad and blue, and losing your vivacity and spirits, and never told me why!"

"I thought it was my duty, John, to try to bear it," said Lillie, with the sweet look of a virgin saint. "I thought perhaps I should get used to things in time; and I think it is a wife's duty to accommodate herself to her husband's circumstances."

"No, it 's a husband's duty to accommodate himself to his wife's wishes," said John. "What 's that fellow's address? I 'll write to him about doing our house forthwith."

"But, John, do pray tell Gracie that it 's *your* wish. I don't want her to think that it 's I that am doing this. Now, pray do think whether you really want it yourself. You see, it must be so natural for you to like the old things! They must have associations, and I would n't for the world, now, be the one to change them; and, after all, how silly it was of me to feel blue!"

"Don't say any more, Lillie. Let me see, — next week," he said, taking out his pocket-book, and looking over his memoranda, — "next week I 'll take you down to Newport; and you write to-day to your mother to meet you there, and be your guest. I 'll write and engage the rooms at once."

"I don't know what I shall do without you, John."

"Oh, well, I could n't stay possibly! But I may run down now and then, for a night, you know."

"Well, we must make that do," said Lillie, with a pensive sigh.

Thus two very important moves on Miss Lillie's checker-board of life were skillfully made. The house was to be refitted and the Newport precedent established.

Now, dear friends, don't think Lillie a pirate, or a conspirator, or a wolf in sheep's clothing, or anything else but what she was, — a pretty little selfish woman; undeveloped in her conscience and affections, and strong in her instincts and perceptions; in a blind way using what means were most in her line to carry her purposes. Lillie had always found her prettiness, her littleness, her helplessness, and her tears so very useful in carrying her points in life that she resorted to them as her lawful stock in trade. Neither were her blues entirely shamming. There comes a time after marriage when a husband, if he be anything of a man, has something else to do than make direct love to his wife. He cannot be on duty at all hours to fan her, and shawl her, and admire her. His love must express itself through other channels. He must be a full man for her sake; and, as a man, must go forth to a whole world of interests that takes him from her. Now what in this case shall a woman do whose only life lies in petting and adoration and display?

Springdale had no *beau monde*, no fashionable circle, no Bois de Boulogne, and no beaux, to make amends for

a husband's engrossments. Grace was sisterly and kind; but what on earth had they in common to talk about? Lillie's wardrobe was in all the freshness of bridal exuberance, and there was nothing more to be got, and so, for the moment, no stimulus in this line. But then where to wear all these fine French dresses? Lillie had been called on, and invited once to little social evening parties, through the whole round of old, respectable families that lived under the elm arches of Springdale; and she had found it rather stupid. There was not a man to make an admirer of, except the young minister, who, after the first afternoon of seeing her, returned to his devotion to Rose Ferguson.

You know, ladies, Æsop has a pretty little fable as follows: A young man fell desperately in love with a cat, and prayed to Jupiter to change her to a woman for his sake. Jupiter was so obliging as to grant his prayer; and, behold, a soft, satin-skinned, purring, graceful woman was given into his arms. But the legend goes on to say that, while he was delighting in her charms, she heard the sound of mice behind the wainscot, and left him forthwith to rush after her congenial prey.

Lillie had heard afar the sound of mice at Newport, and she longed to be after them once more. Had she not a prestige now as a rich young married lady? Had she not jewels and gems to show? Had she not any number of mouse-traps, in the way of ravishing toilets? She thought it all over, till she was sick with longing, and was sure that nothing but the sea air could do her any good; and so she fell to crying, and kissing her faithful John, till she gained her end, like a veritable little cat as she was.

CHAPTER XI

NEWPORT; OR, THE PARADISE OF NOTHING TO DO

Behold, now, our Lillie at the height of her heart's desire, installed in fashionable apartments at Newport, under the placid chaperonship of dear mamma, who never saw the least harm in any earthly thing her Lillie chose to do. All the dash and flash and furbelow of uppertendom were there; and Lillie now felt the full power and glory of being a rich, pretty, young married woman, with oceans of money to spend, and nothing on earth to do but follow the fancies of the passing hour.

This was Lillie's highest ideal of happiness; and didn't she enjoy it? Wasn't it something to flame forth in wondrous toilets in the eyes of Belle Trevors and Margy Silloway and Lottie Cavers, who were *not* married; and before the Simpkinses and the Tomkinses and the Jenkinses, who, last year, had said hateful things about her, and intimated that she had gone off in her looks, and was on the way to be an old maid?

And wasn't it a triumph when all her old beaux came flocking round her, and her parlors became a daily resort and lounging-place for all the idle swains, both of her former acquaintance and of the newcomers, who drifted with the tide of fashion? Never had she been so much the rage; never had she been declared so "stunning." The effect of all this good fortune on her health was immediate. We all know how the spirits affect the bodily welfare; and hence, my dear gentlemen, we desire it to be solemnly impressed on you that there is nothing so good for a woman's health as to give her her own way.

Lillie now, from this simple cause, received enormous accessions of vigor. While at home with plain, sober John, trying to walk in the quiet paths of domesticity, how did her spirits droop! If you only could have had a vision of her brain and spinal system, you would have seen how there was no nervous fluid there, and how all the fine little cords and fibres that string the muscles were wilting like flowers out of water; but now she could bathe the longest and the strongest of any one, could ride on the beach half the day, and dance the german into the small hours of the night, with a degree of vigor which showed conclusively what a fine thing for her the Newport air was. Her dancing-list was always overcrowded with applicants; bouquets were showered on her; and the most superb "turn-outs," with their masters for charioteers, were at her daily disposal.

All this made talk. The world does n't forgive success; and the ancients informed us that even the gods were envious of happy people. It is astonishing to see the quantity of very proper and rational moral reflection that is excited in the breast of society by any sort of success in life. How it shows them the vanity of earthly enjoyments, the impropriety of setting one's heart on it! How does a successful married flirt impress all her friends with the gross impropriety of having one's head set on gentlemen's attentions!

"I must say," said Belle Trevors, "that dear Lillie does astonish me. Now, I should n't want to have that dissipated Danforth lounging in my rooms every day, as he does in Lillie's; and then taking her out driving day after day; for my part, I don't think it 's respectable."

"Why don't you speak to her?" said Lottie Cavers.

"Oh, my dear! she would n't mind me. Lillie always was the most imprudent creature; and if she goes on so, she 'll certainly get awfully talked about. That Danforth is a horrid creature; I know all about him."

As Miss Belle had herself been driving with the "horrid creature" only the week before Lillie came, it must be confessed that her opportunities for observation were of an authentic kind.

Lillie, as queen in her own parlor, was all grace and indulgence. Hers was now to be the sisterly rôle, or, as she laughingly styled it, the maternal. With a ravishing morning-dress, and with a killing little cap of about three inches in extent on her head, she enacted the young matron, and gave full permission to Tom, Dick, and Harry to make themselves at home in her room, and smoke their cigars there in peace. She "adored the smell;" in fact, she accepted the present of a fancy box of cigarettes from Danforth with graciousness, and would sometimes smoke one purely for good company. She also encouraged her followers to unveil the tender secrets of their souls confidentially to her, and offered gracious mediations on their behalf with any of the flitting Newport fair ones. When they, as in duty bound, said that they saw nobody whom they cared about now she was married, that she was the only woman on earth for them, — she rapped their knuckles briskly with her fan, and bid them mind their manners. All this mode of proceeding gave her an immense success.

But, as we said before, all this was talked about; and ladies in their letters, chronicling the events of the passing hour, sent the tidings up and down the country; and so Miss Letitia Ferguson got a letter from Mrs. Wilcox with full pictures and comments; and she brought the same to Grace Seymour.

"I dare say," said Letitia, "these things have been exaggerated; they always are: still, it does seem desirable that your brother should go there, and be with her."

"He can't go and be with her," said Grace, "without neglecting his business, already too much neglected. Then

the house is all in confusion under the hands of painters; and there is that young artist up there, — a very elegant gentleman, — giving orders to right and left, every one of which involves further confusion and deeper expense; for my part, I see no end to it. Poor John has got 'the Old Man of the Sea' on his back in the shape of this woman; and I expect she 'll be the ruin of him yet. I can't want to break up his illusion about her; because, what good will it do? He has married her, and must live with her; and, for Heaven's sake, let the illusion last while it can! I 'm going to draw off, and leave them to each other; there 's no other way."

"You are, Gracie?"

"Yes; you see John came to me, all stammering and embarrassment, about this making over of the old place; but I put him at ease at once. 'The most natural thing in the world, John,' said I. 'Of course Lillie has her taste; and it 's her right to have the house arranged to suit it.' And then I proposed to take all the old family things, and furnish the house that I own on Elm Street, and live there, and let John and Lillie keep house by themselves. You see, there is no helping the thing. Married people must be left to themselves; nobody can help them. They must make their own discoveries, fight their own battles, sink or swim, together; and I have determined that not by the winking of an eye will I interfere between them."

"Well, but do you think John wants you to go?"

"He feels badly about it; and yet I have convinced him that it 's best. Poor fellow! all these changes are not a bit to his taste. He liked the old place as it was, and the old ways; but John is so unselfish. He has got it in his head that Lillie is very sensitive and peculiar, and that her spirits require all these changes, as well as Newport air."

"Well," said Letitia, "if a man begins to say A in that line, he must say B."

"Of course," said Grace; "and also C and D, and so on, down to X, Y, Z. A woman, armed with sick headaches, nervousness, debility, presentiments, fears, horrors, and all sorts of imaginary and real diseases, has an eternal armory of weapons of subjugation. What can a man do? Can he tell her that she is lying and shamming? Half the time she is n't; she can actually work herself into about any physical state she chooses. The fortnight before Lillie went to Newport she really looked pale, and ate next to nothing; and she managed admirably to seem to be trying to keep up, and not to complain, — yet you see how she can go on at Newport."

"It seems a pity John could n't understand her."

"My dear, I would n't have him for the world. Whenever he does, he will despise her; and then he will be wretched. For John is no hypocrite, any more than I am. No, I earnestly pray that his soap-bubble may not break."

"Well, then," said Letitia, "at least, he might go down to Newport for a day or two; and his presence there might set some things right: it might at least check reports. You might just suggest to him that unfriendly things were being said."

"Well, I 'll see what I can do," said Grace.

So, by a little feminine tact in suggestion, Grace dispatched her brother to spend a day or two in Newport.

His coming and presence interrupted the lounging hours in Lillie's rooms; the introduction to "my husband" shortened the interviews. John was courteous and affable; but he neither smoked nor drank, and there was a mutual repulsion between him and many of Lillie's *habitués*.

"I say, Dan," said Bill Sanders to Danforth, as they

were smoking on one end of the veranda, "you are driven out of your lodgings since Seymour came."

"No more than the rest of you," said Danforth.

"I don't know about that, Dan. I think *you* might have been taken for master of those premises. Look here now, Dan, why did n't you *take* little Lil yourself? Everybody thought you were going to last year."

"Did n't want her; knew too much," said Danforth. "Did n't want to keep her; she 's too cursedly extravagant. It 's jolly to have this sort of concern on hand; but I 'd rather Seymour 'd pay her bills than I."

"Who thought you were so practical, Dan?"

"Practical! that I am; I 'm an old bird. Take my advice, boys, now: keep shy of the girls, and flirt with the married ones, — then you don't get roped in."

"I say, boys," said Tom Nichols, "is n't she a case, now? What a head she has! I bet she can smoke equal to any of us."

"Yes; I keep her in cigarettes," said Danforth; "she 's got a box of them somewhere under her ruffles now."

"What if Seymour should find them?" said Tom.

"Seymour? pooh! he 's a muff and a prig. I bet you he won't find her out; she 's the jolliest little humbugger there is going. She 'd cheat a fellow out of the sight of his eyes. It 's perfectly wonderful."

"How came Seymour to marry her?"

"He? Why, he 's a pious youth, green as grass itself; and I suppose she talked religion to him. Did you ever hear her talk religion?"

A roar of laughter followed this, out of which Danforth went on. "By George, boys, she gave me a Prayer-Book once! I 've got it yet."

"Well, if that is n't the best thing I ever heard!" said Nichols.

"It was at the time she was laying siege to me, you see.

She undertook the part of guardian angel, and used to talk lots of sentiment. The girls get lots of that out of George Sand's novels about the *holiness* of doing just as you 've a mind to, and all that," said Danforth.

"By George, Dan, you ought n't to laugh. She may have more good in her than you think."

"Oh, humbug! don't I know her?"

"Well, at any rate she 's a wonderful creature to hold her looks. By George, how she does hold out! You 'd say, now, she was n't more than twenty."

"Yes; she understands getting herself up," said Danforth, "and touches up her cheeks a bit now and then."

"She don't paint, though?"

"Don't paint! *Don't* she? I 'd like to know if she don't; but she does it like an artist, like an old master, in fact."

"Or like a young mistress," said Tom, and then laughed at his own wit.

Now, it so happened that John was sitting at an open window above, and heard occasional snatches of this conversation quite sufficient to impress him disagreeably. He had not heard enough to know exactly what had been said, but enough to feel that a set of coarse, low-minded men were making quite free with the name and reputation of his Lillie, and he was indignant.

"She is so pretty, so frank, and so impulsive," he said. "Such women are always misconstrued. I 'm resolved to caution her."

"Lillie," he said, "who is this Danforth?"

"Charlie Danforth — oh! he 's a millionaire that I refused. He was wild about me, — is now, for that matter. He perfectly haunts my rooms, and is always teasing me to ride with him."

"Well, Lillie, if I were you, I would n't have anything to do with him."

"John, I don't mean to, any more than I can help. I try to keep him off all I can; but one does n't want to be rude, you know."

"My darling," said John, "you little know the wickedness of the world, and the cruel things that men will allow themselves to say of women who are meaning no harm. You can't be too careful, Lillie."

"Oh! I am careful. Mamma is here, you know, all the while; and I never receive except she is present."

John sat abstractedly fingering the various objects on the table; then he opened a drawer in the same mechanical manner.

"Why, Lillie! what 's this? what in the world are these?"

"Oh, John! sure enough! well, there is something I was going to ask you about. Danforth used always to be sending me things, you know, before we were married, — flowers and confectionery, and one thing or other; and since I have been here now, he has done the same, and I really did n't know what to do about it. You know I did n't want to quarrel with him, or get his ill will; he 's a high-spirited fellow, and a man one does n't want for an enemy; so I have just passed it over easy as I could."

"But, Lillie, a box of cigarettes! — of course, they can be of no use to you."

"Of course: they are only a sort of curiosity that he imports from Spain with his cigars."

"I 've a great mind to send them back to him myself," said John.

"Oh, don't, John! why, how it would look! as if you were angry, or thought he meant something wrong. No; I 'll contrive a way to give 'em back without offending him. I am up to all such little ways."

"Come, now," she added, "don't let 's be cross just the little time you have to stay with me. I do wish our

house were not all torn up, so that I could go home with you, and leave Newport and all its bothers behind."

"Well, Lillie, you could go, and stay with me at Gracie's," said John, brightening at this proposition.

"Dear Gracie, — so she has got a house all to herself; how I shall miss her! but, really, John, I think she will be happier. Since you would insist on revolutionizing our house, you know" —

"But, Lillie, it was to please you."

"Oh, I know it! but you know I begged you not to. Well, John, I don't think I should like to go in and settle down on Grace; perhaps, as I am here, and the sea air and bathing strengthen me so, we may as well put it through. I will come home as soon as the house is done."

"But perhaps you would want to go with me to New York to select the furniture?"

"Oh, the artist does all that! Charlie Ferrola will give his orders to Simon & Sauls, and they will do everything up complete. It 's the way they all do — saves lots of trouble."

John went home, after three days spent in Newport, feeling that Lillie was somehow an injured fair one, and that the envious world bore down always on beauty and prosperity. But incidentally he heard and overheard much that made him uneasy. He heard her admired as a "bully" girl, a "fast one;" he heard of her smoking, he overheard something about "painting."

The time was that John thought Lillie an embryo angel, — an angel a little bewildered and gone astray, and with wings a trifle the worse for the world's wear, — but essentially an angel of the same nature with his own revered mother. Gradually the mercury had been falling in the tube of his estimation. He had given up the angel; and now to himself he called her "a silly little pussy," but he did it with a smile. It was such a neat, white, graceful

pussy; and all his own pussy too, and purred and rubbed its little head on no coat-sleeve but his, — of that he was certain. Only a bit silly. She would still fib a little, John feared, especially when he looked back to the chapter about her age, — and then, perhaps, about the cigarettes. Well, she might, perhaps, in a wild, excited hour, have smoked one or two, just for fun, and the thing had been exaggerated. She had promised fairly to return those cigarettes, — he dared not say to himself that he feared she would not. He kept saying to himself that she would. It was necessary to say this often to make himself believe it.

As to painting — well, John didn't like to ask her, because, what if she shouldn't tell him the truth? And if she did paint, was it so great a sin, poor little thing? He would watch, and bring her out of it. After all, when the house was all finished and arranged, and he got her back from Newport, there would be a long, quiet, domestic winter at Springdale; and they would get up their reading-circles, and he would set her to improving her mind, and gradually the vision of this empty, fashionable life would die out of her horizon, and she would come into his ways of thinking and doing.

But, after all, John managed to be proud of her. When he read in the columns of "The Herald" the account of the Splandangerous ball in Newport, and of the entrancingly beautiful Mrs. J. S., who appeared in a radiant dress of silvery gauze made *à la nuæge*, etc., etc., John was rather pleased than otherwise. Lillie danced till daylight, — it showed that she must be getting back her strength, — and she was voted the belle of the scene. Who wouldn't take the comfort that is to be got in anything? John owned this fashionable meteor, — why shouldn't he rejoice in it?

Two years ago, had anybody told him that one day he should have a wife that told fibs, and painted, and smoked

cigarettes, and danced all night at Newport, and yet that he should love her, and be proud of her, he would have said, Is thy servant a dog? He was then a considerate, thoughtful John, serious and careful in his life-plans; and the wife that was to be his companion was something celestial. But so it is. By degrees we accommodate ourselves to the actual and existing. To all intents and purposes, for us it is the inevitable.

CHAPTER XII

HOME A LA POMPADOUR

WELL, Lillie came back at last; and John conducted her over the transformed Seymour mansion, where literally old things had passed away, and all things become new. There was not a relic of the past. The house was furbished and resplendent — it was gilded — it was frescoed — it was à la Pompadour, and à la Louis Quinze and Louis Quatorze, and à la everything Frenchy and pretty, and gay and glistening. For though the parlors at first were the only apartments contemplated in this *renaissance*, yet it came to pass that the parlors, when all tricked out, cast such invidious reflections on the chambers that the chambers felt themselves old and rubbishy, and prayed and stretched out hands of imploration to have something done for *them!*

So the spare chamber was first included in the glorification programme; but when the spare chamber was once made into a Pompadour pavilion, it so flouted and despised the other old-fashioned Yankee chambers, that they were ready to die with envy; and, in short, there was no way to produce a sense of artistic unity, peace, and quietness, but to do the whole thing over, which was done triumphantly.

The French Emperor, Louis Napoleon, who was a shrewd sort of a man in his day and way, used to talk a great deal about the "logic of events;" which language, being interpreted, my dear gentlemen, means a good deal in domestic life. It means, for instance, that when you

drive the first nail, or tear down the first board, in the way of alteration of an old house, you will have to make over every room and corner in it, and pay as much again for it as if you built a new one.

John was able to sympathize with Lillie in her childish delight in the new house, because he loved her, and was able to put himself and his own wishes out of the question for her sake; but when all the bills connected with this change came in, he had emotions with which Lillie could not sympathize: first, because she knew nothing about figures, and was resolved never to know anything, and, like all people who know nothing about them, she cared nothing; and, second, because she did *not* love John.

Now, the truth is, Lillie would have been quite astonished to have been told this. She and many other women suppose that they love their husbands, when, unfortunately, they have not the beginning of an idea what love is. Let me explain it to you, my dear lady. Loving to be admired by a man, loving to be petted by him, loving to be caressed by him, and loving to be praised by him, is not loving a man. All these may be when a woman has no power of loving at all, — they may all be simply because she loves herself, and loves to be flattered, praised, caressed, coaxed — as a cat likes to be coaxed and stroked, and fed with cream, and have a warm corner.

But all this is not love. It may exist, to be sure, where there is love; it generally does. But it may also exist where there is no love. Love, my dear ladies, is self-sacrifice; it is a life out of self and in another. Its very essence is the preferring of the comfort, the ease, the wishes of another to one's own, for the love we bear them. Love is giving, and not receiving. Love is not a sheet of blotting-paper or a sponge, sucking in everything to itself; it is an out-springing fountain, giving from itself. Love's

motto has been dropped in this world as a chance gem of great price by the loveliest, the fairest, the purest, the strongest of Lovers that ever trod this mortal earth, of whom it is recorded that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now, in love, there are ten receivers to one giver. There are ten persons in this world who like to be loved and love love, where there is one who knows how to love. That, O my dear ladies, is a nobler attainment than all your French and music and dancing. You may lose the very power of it by smothering it under a load of early self-indulgence. By living just as you are all wanting to live — living to be petted, to be flattered, to be admired, to be praised, to have your own way, and to do only that which is easy and agreeable — you may lose the power of self-denial and self-sacrifice; you may lose the power of loving nobly and worthily, and become a mere sheet of blotting-paper all your life.

You will please to observe that, in all the married life of these two, as thus far told, all the accommodations, compliances, changes, have been made by John for Lillie. He has been, step by step, giving up to her his ideal of life, and trying, as far as so different a nature can, to accommodate his to hers; and she accepts all this as her right and due. She sees no particular cause of gratitude in it, — it is what she expected when she married. Her own specialty, the thing which she has always cultivated, is to get that sort of power over man by which she can carry her own points and purposes, and make him flexible to her will; nor does a suspicion of the utter worthlessness and selfishness of such a life ever darken the horizon of her thoughts.

John's bills were graver than he expected. It is true he was rich; but riches is a relative term. As related to the style of living hitherto practiced in his establishment, John's income was princely, and left a large balance to be

devoted to works of general benevolence; but he perceived that, in this year, that balance would be all absorbed; and this troubled him.

Then, again, his establishment being now given up by his sister must be reorganized, with Lillie at its head; and Lillie declared in the outset that she could not, and would not, take any trouble about anything. "John would have to get servants; and the servants would have to see to things:" she "was resolved, for one thing, that she was n't going to be a slave to housekeeping."

By great pains and importunity, and an offer of high wages, Grace and John retained Bridget in the establishment, and secured from New York a seamstress and a waitress, and other members to make out a domestic staff. This sisterhood was from the isle of Erin, and not an unfavorable specimen of that important portion of our domestic life. They were quick-witted, well versed in a certain degree of household and domestic skill, guided in well-doing more by impulsive good feeling than by any very enlightened principle. The dominant idea with them all appeared to be, that they were living in the house of a millionaire, where money flowed through the establishment in a golden stream, out of which all might drink freely and rejoicingly, with no questions asked. Mrs. Lillie concerned herself only with results, and paid no attention to ways and means. She wanted a dainty and generous table to be spread for her, at all proper hours, with every pleasing and agreeable variety; to which she should come as she would to the table of a boarding-house, without troubling her head where anything came from or went to.

Bridget, having been for some years under the training and surveillance of Grace Seymour, was more than usually competent as cook and provider; but Bridget had abundance of the Irish astuteness, which led her to feel the

genius of circumstances, and to shape her course accordingly. With Grace, she had been accurate, saving, and economical; for Miss Grace was so. Bridget had felt, under her sway, the beauty of that economy which saves because saving is in itself so fitting and so respectable; and because, in this way, a power for a wise generosity is accumulated. She was sympathetic with the ruling spirit of the establishment.

But under the new mistress, Bridget declined in virtue. The announcement that the mistress of a family is n't going to give herself any trouble, nor bother her head with care about anything, is one the influence of which is felt downward in every department. Why should Bridget give herself any trouble to save and economize for a mistress who took none for herself? She had worked hard all her life, why not take it easy? And it was so much easier to send daily a basket of cold victuals to her cousin on Vine Street than to contrive ways of making the most of things, that Bridget felt perfectly justified in doing it. If, once in a while, a little tea and a paper of sugar found their way into the same basket, who would ever miss it?

The seamstress was an elegant lady. She kept all Lillie's dresses and laces and wardrobe, and had something ready for her to put on when she changed her toilet every day. If this very fine lady wore her mistress's skirts and sashes, and laces and jewelry, on the sly, to evening parties among the upper servant circles of Springdale, who was to know it? Mrs. John Seymour knew nothing about where her things were, nor what was their condition, and never wanted to trouble herself to inquire.

It may therefore be inferred that when John began to settle up accounts, and look into financial matters, they seemed to him not to be going exactly in the most promising way. He thought he would give Lillie a little practical insight into his business, — show her exactly what his

income was, and make some estimates of his expenses, just that she might have some little idea how things were going. So John, with great care, prepared a nice little account-book, prefaced by a table of figures, showing the income of the Spindlewood property, and the income of his law business, and his income from other sources. Against this he placed the necessary outgoes of his business, and showed what balance might be left. Then he showed what had hitherto been spent for various benevolent purposes connected with the schools and his establishments at Spindlewood. He showed what had been the bills for the refitting of the house, and what were now the running current expenses of the family. He hoped that he had made all these so plain and simple that Lillie might easily be made to understand them, and that thus some clear financial boundaries might appear in her mind. Then he seized a favorable hour, and produced his book.

"Lillie," he said, "I want to make you understand a little about our expenditures and income."

"Oh, dreadful, John! don't, pray! I never had any head for things of that kind."

"But, Lillie, please let me show you," persisted John. "I 've made it just as simple as can be."

"Oh, John! now — I just — can't — there now! Don't bring that book now; it 'll just make me low-spirited and cross. I never had the least head for figures; mamma always said so; and if there is anything that seems to me perfectly dreadful, it is accounts. I don't think it 's any of a woman's business — it 's all man's work, and men have got to see to it. Now, please don't," she added, coming to him coaxingly, and putting her arm round his neck.

"But you see, Lillie," John persevered in a pleading tone, — "you see, all these alterations that have been made in the house have involved very serious expenses; and

then, too, we are living at a very different rate of expense from what we ever lived before" —

"There it is, John! Now, you ought n't to reproach me with it; for you know it was your own idea. I did n't want the alterations made; but you would insist on it. I did n't think it was best; but you would have them."

"But, Lillie, it was all because you wanted them."

"Well, I dare say; but I should n't have wanted them if I thought it was going to bring in all this bother and trouble, and make me have to look over old accounts, and all such things. I 'd rather never have had anything!" And here Lillie began to cry.

"Come, now, my darling, do be a sensible woman, and not act like a baby."

"There, John! it 's just as I knew it would be; I always said you wanted a different sort of a woman for a wife. Now, you knew when you took me that I was n't in the least strong-minded or sensible, but a poor little helpless thing; and you are beginning to get tired of me already. You wish you had married a woman like Grace, I know you do."

"Lillie, how silly! Please do listen now. You have no idea how simple and easy what I want to explain to you is."

"Well, John, I can't to-night, anyhow, because I have a headache. Just this talk has got my head to thumping so, — it 's really dreadful! and I 'm so low-spirited! I do wish you had a wife that would suit you better." And forthwith Mrs. Lillie dissolved in tears; and John stroked her head, and petted her, and called her a nice little pussy, and begged her pardon for being so rough with her, and, in short, acted like a fool generally.

"If that woman was *my* wife now," I fancy I hear some youth with a promising mustache remark, "I 'd make her behave!"

Well, sir, supposing she was your wife, what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do when accounts give your wife a sick headache, so that she cannot possibly attend to them? Are you going to enact the Bluebeard, and rage and storm, and threaten to cut her head off? What good would that do? Cutting off a wrong little head would not turn it into a right one. An ancient proverb significantly remarks, "You can't have more of a cat than her skin," — and no amount of fuming and storming can make anything more of a woman than she is. Such as your wife is, sir, you must take her, and make the best of it. Perhaps you want your own way. Don't you wish you could get it?

But didn't she promise to obey? Didn't she? Of course. Then why is it that I must be all the while yielding points, and she never? Well, sir, that is for you to settle. The marriage service gives you authority; so does the law of the land. John could lock up Mrs. Lillie till she learned her lessons; he could do any of twenty other things that no gentleman would ever think of doing, and the law would support him in it. But because John is a gentleman, and not Paddy from Cork, he strokes his wife's head, and submits.

We understand that our brethren, the Methodists, have recently decided to leave the word "obey" out of the marriage service. Our friends are, as all the world knows, a most wise and prudent denomination, and guided by a very practical sense in their arrangements. If they have left the word "obey" out, it is because they have concluded that it does no good to put it in, — a decision that John's experience would go a long way to justify.

CHAPTER XIII

JOHN'S BIRTHDAY

"My dear Lillie," quoth John one morning, "next week Wednesday is my birthday."

"Is it? How charming! What shall we do?"

"Well, Lillie, it has always been our custom — Grace's and mine — to give a grand fête here to all our work-people. We invite them all over *en masse*, and have the house and grounds all open, and devote ourselves to giving them a good time."

Lillie's countenance fell. "Now, really, John, how trying! what shall we do? You don't really propose to bring all those low, dirty, little factory children in Spindlewood through our elegant new house? Just look at that satin furniture, and think what it will be when a whole parcel of freckled, tow-headed, snubby-nosed children have eaten bread and butter and doughnuts over it! Now, John, there is reason in all things; *this* house is not made for a missionary asylum."

John, thus admonished, looked at his house, and was fain to admit that there was the usual amount of that good, selfish, hard grit — called common sense — in Lillie's remarks.

Rooms have their atmosphere, their necessities, their artistic proprieties. Apartments à la Louis Quatorze represent the ideas and the sympathies of a period when the rich lived by themselves in luxury, and the poor were trodden down in the gutter; when there was only aristocratic contempt and domination on one side, and servility

and smothered curses on the other. With the change of the apartments to the style of that past era seemed to come its maxims and morals, as artistically indicated for its completeness. So John walked up and down in his Louis Quinze salon, and into his Pompadour boudoir, and out again into the Louis Quatorze dining-rooms, and reflected. He had had many reflections in those apartments before. Of all ill-adapted and unsuitable pieces of furniture in them, he had always felt himself the most unsuitable and ill adapted. He had never felt at home in them. He never felt like lolling at ease on any of those elegant sofas, as of old he used to cast himself into the motherly arms of the great chintz one that filled the recess. His Lillie, with her smart paraphernalia of hoops and puffs and ruffles and pinkings and bows, seemed a perfectly natural and indigenous production there; but he himself seemed always to be out of place. His Lillie might have been any of Balzac's charming duchesses, with their "thirty-seven thousand ways of saying 'Yes;'" but as to himself, he must have been taken for her steward or gardener, who had accidentally strayed in, and was fraying her satin surroundings with rough coats and heavy boots. There was not, in fact, in all the reorganized house, a place where he felt *himself* to be at all the proper thing; nowhere where he could lounge, and read his newspaper, without a feeling of impropriety; nowhere that he could indulge in any of the slight Hottentotisms wherein unrenewed male nature delights, — without a feeling of rebuke.

John had not philosophized on the causes of this. He knew, in a general and unconfessed way, that he was not comfortable in his new arrangements; but he supposed it was his own fault. He had fallen into rusty, old-fashioned, bachelor ways; and like other things that are not agreeable to the natural man, he supposed his trim, resplendent, genteel house was good for him, and that he

ought to like it, and by grace should attain to liking it, if he only tried long enough. Only he took long rests every day while he went to Grace's, on Elm Street, and stretched himself on the old sofa, and sat in his mother's old arm-chair, and told Grace how very elegant their house was, and how much taste the architect had shown, and how much Lillie was delighted with it.

But this silent walk of John's, up and down his brilliant apartments, opened his eyes to another troublesome prospect. He was a Christian man, with a high aim and ideal in life. He believed in the Sermon on the Mount, and other radical preaching of that nature; and he was a very honest man, and hated humbug in every shape. Nothing seemed meaner to him than to profess a sham. But it began in a cloudy way to appear to him that there is a manner of arranging one's houses that makes it difficult — yes, wellnigh impossible — to act out in them any of the brotherhood principles of those discourses.

There are houses where the self-respecting poor, or the honest laboring man and woman, cannot be made to enter or to feel at home. They are made for the selfish luxury of the privileged few. Then John reflected, uneasily, that this change in his house had absorbed that whole balance which usually remained on his accounts to be devoted to benevolent purposes, and with which this year he had proposed to erect a reading-room for his work-people.

"Lillie," said John, as he walked uneasily up and down, "I wish you would try to help me in this thing. I always have done it, — my father and mother did it before me, — and I don't want all of a sudden to depart from it. It may seem a little thing, but it does a great deal of good. It produces kind feeling; it refines and educates and softens them."

"Oh, well, John! if you say so, I must, I suppose," said Lillie, with a sigh. "I can have the carpets and fur-

niture all covered, I suppose; it 'll be no end of trouble, but I 'll try. But I must say, I think all this kind of petting of the working-classes does no sort of good; it only makes them uppish and exacting: you never get any gratitude for it."

"But you know, dearie, what is said about doing good, 'hoping for nothing again,'" said John.

"Now, John, please don't preach, of all things. Have n't I told you that I 'll try my best? I am going to, — I 'll work with all my strength, — you know that is n't much, — but I shall exert myself to the utmost if you say so."

"My dear, I don't want you to injure yourself!"

"Oh! I don't mind," said Lillie, with the air of a martyr. "The servants, I suppose, will make a fuss about it; and I should n't wonder if it was the means of sending them every one off in a body, and leaving me without any help in the house, just as the Follingsbees and the Simpkinses are coming to visit us."

"I did n't know that you had invited the Follingsbees and Simpkinses," said John.

"Did n't I tell you? I meant to," said Mrs. Lillie innocently.

"I don't like those Follingsbees, Lillie. He is a man I have no respect for; he is one of those shoddy upstarts, not at all our sort of folks. I 'm sorry you asked him."

"But his wife is my particular friend," said Lillie, "and they were very polite to mamma and me at Newport; and we really owe them some attention."

"Well, Lillie, since you have asked them, I will be polite to them; and I will try and do everything to save you care in this entertainment. I 'll speak to Bridget myself; she knows our ways, and has been used to managing."

And so, as John was greatly beloved by Bridget, and as all the domestic staff had the true Irish fealty to the man

of the house, and would run themselves off their feet in his service any day, — it came to pass that the fête was holden, as of yore, in the grounds. Grace was there and helped, and so were Letitia and Rose Ferguson; and all passed off better than could be expected. But John did not enjoy it. He felt all the while that he was dragging Lillie as a thousand-pound weight after him; and he inly resolved that, once out of that day's festival, he would never try to have it again.

Lillie went to bed with sick headache, and lay two days after it, during which she cried and lamented incessantly. She "knew she was not the wife for John;" she "always told him he would n't be satisfied with her, and now she saw he was n't; but she had tried her very best, and now it was cruel to think she should not succeed any better."

"My dearest child," said John, who, to say the truth, was beginning to find this thing less charming than it used to be, "I *am* satisfied. I am much obliged to you. I 'm sure you have done all that could be asked."

"Well, I 'm sure I hope those folks of yours were pleased," quoth Lillie, as she lay looking like a martyr, with a cloth wet in ice-water bound round her head. "They ought to be; they have left grease spots all over the sofa in my boudoir, from one end to the other; and cake and raisins have been trodden into the carpets; and the turf around the oval is all cut up; and they have broken my little Diana; and such a din as there was! — oh, me! it makes my head ache to think of it."

"Never mind, Lillie, I 'll see to it, and set it all right."

"No, you can't. One of the children broke that model of the Leaning Tower too. I found it. You can't teach such children to let things alone. Oh, dear me! my head!"

"There, there, pussy! only don't worry," said John in soothing tones.

"Don't think me horrid, please don't," said Lillie piteously. "I did try to have things go right; did n't I?"

"Certainly you did, dearie; so don't worry. I 'll get all the spots taken out, and all the things mended, and make everything right."

So John called Rosa, on his way downstairs. "Show me the sofa that they spoiled," said he.

"Sofa?" said Rosa.

"Yes; I understand the children greased the sofa in Mrs. Seymour's boudoir."

"Oh, dear, no! nothing of the sort; I 've been putting everything to rights in all the rooms, and they look beautifully."

"Did n't they break something?"

"Oh, no, nothing! The little things were good as could be."

"That Leaning Tower, and that little Diana," suggested John.

"Oh, dear me, no! I broke those a month ago, and showed them to Mrs. Seymour, and promised to mend them. Oh! she knows all about that."

"Ah!" said John, "I did n't know that. Well, Rosa, put everything up nicely, and divide this money among the girls for extra trouble," he added, slipping a bill into her hand.

"I 'm sure there 's no trouble," said Rosa. "We all enjoyed it; and I believe everybody did; only I 'm sorry it was too much for Mrs. Seymour; she is very delicate."

"Yes, she is," said John, as he turned away, drawing a long, slow sigh.

That long, slow sigh had become a frequent and unconscious occurrence with him of late. When our ideals are sick unto death; when they are slowly dying and passing away from us, we sigh thus. John said to himself softly, — no matter what; but he felt the pang of knowing again

what he had known so often of late, that his Lillie's word was not golden. What she said would not bear close examination. Therefore why examine?

"Evidently she is determined that this thing shall not go on," said John. "Well, I shall never try again; it 's of no use;" and John went up to his sister's, and threw himself down upon the old chintz sofa as if it had been his mother's bosom. His sister sat there, sewing. The sun came twinkling through a rustic framework of ivy which it had been the pride of her heart to arrange the week before. All the old family pictures and heirlooms, and sketches and pencilings, were arranged in the most charming way, so that her rooms seemed a reproduction of the old home.

"Hang it all!" said John, with a great flounce as he turned over on the sofa. "I 'm not up to par this morning."

Now, Grace had that perfect intuitive knowledge of just what the matter was with her brother that women always have who have grown up in intimacy with a man. These fine female eyes see farther between the rough cracks and ridges of the oak bark of manhood than men themselves. Nothing would have been easier, had Grace been a jealous *exigeante* woman, than to have passed a fine probe of sisterly inquiry into the weak places where the ties between John and Lillie were growing slack, and untied and loosened them more and more. She could have done it so tenderly, so conscientiously, so pityingly — encouraging John to talk and to complain, and taking part with him, — till there should come to be two parties in the family, the brother and sister against the wife.

How strong the temptation was, those may feel who reflect that this one subject caused an almost total eclipse of the lifelong habit of confidence which had existed between Grace and her brother, and that her brother was her

life and her world. But Grace was one of those women formed under the kindly severe discipline of Puritan New England, to act not from blind impulse or instinct, but from high principle. The habit of self-examination and self-inspection, for which the religious teaching of New England has been peculiar, produced a race of women who rose superior to those mere feminine caprices and impulses which often hurry very generous and kindly natured persons into ungenerous and dishonorable conduct. Grace had been trained, by a father and mother whose marriage union was an ideal of mutual love, honor, and respect, to feel that marriage was the holiest and most awful of obligations. To her the idea of a husband or a wife betraying each other's weaknesses or faults by complaints to a third party seemed something sacrilegious; and she used all her womanly tact and skill to prevent any conversation that might lead to such a result.

"Lillie is entirely knocked up by the affair yesterday; she had a terrible headache this morning," said John.

"Poor child! She is a delicate little thing," said Grace.

"She could n't have had any labor," continued John, "for I saw to everything and provided everything myself; and Bridget and Rosa and all the girls entered into it with real spirit, and Lillie did the best she could, poor girl! but I could see all the time she was worrying about her new fizgigs and fol-de-rols in the house. Hang it! I wish they were all in the Red Sea!" burst out John, glad to find something to vent himself upon. "If I had known that making the house over was going to be such a restraint on a fellow I would never have done it."

"Oh, well! never mind that now," said Grace. "Your house will get rubbed down by and by, and the new gloss taken off; and so will your wife, and you will all be cosy and easy as an old shoe. Young mistresses, you see, have nerves all over their house at first. They tremble at every

dent in their furniture, and wink when you come near it, as if you were going to hit it a blow; but that wears off in time, and they learn to take it easy."

John looked relieved; but after a minute broke out again: "I say, Gracie, Lillie has gone and invited the Simpkinses and the Follingsbees here this fall. Just think of it!"

"Well, I suppose you expect your wife to have the right of inviting her company," said Grace.

"But you know, Gracie, they are not at all our sort of folks," said John. "None of our set would ever think of visiting them, and it 'll seem so odd to see them here. Follingsbee is a vulgar sharper, who has made his money out of our country by dishonest contracts during the war. I don't know much about his wife. Lillie says she is her intimate friend."

"Oh, well, John! we must get over it in the quietest way possible. It would n't be handsome not to make the agreeable to your wife's company; and if you don't like the quality of it, why, you are a good deal nearer to her than any one else can be, — you can gradually detach her from them."

"Then you think I ought to put a good face on their coming?" said John, with a sigh of relief.

"Oh, certainly! of course. What else can you do? It 's one of the things to be expected with a young wife."

"And do you think the Wilcoxes and the Fergusons and the rest of our set will be civil?"

"Why, of course they will," said Grace. "Rose and Letitia will, certainly; and the others will follow suit. After all, John, perhaps we old families, as we call ourselves, are a little bit pharisaical and self-righteous, and too apt to thank God that we are not as other men are. It 'll do us good to be obliged to come a little out of our crinkles."

"It isn't any old family feeling about Follingsbee," said John. "But I feel that that man deserves to be in state's prison much more than many a poor dog that is there now."

"And that may be true of many another, even in the selectest circles of good society," said Grace; "but we are not called on to play Providence, nor pronounce judgments. The common courtesies of life do not commit us one way or the other. The Lord himself does not express his opinion of the wicked, but allows all an equal share in his kindliness."

"Well, Gracie, you are right; and I'll constrain myself to do the thing handsomely," said John.

"The thing with you men," said Grace, "is, that you want your wives to see with your eyes, all in a minute, what has got to come with years and intimacy, and the gradual growing closer and closer together. The husband and wife, of themselves, drop many friendships and associations that at first were mutually distasteful, simply because their tastes have grown insensibly to be the same."

John hoped it would be so with himself and Lillie; for he was still very much in love with her; and it comforted him to have Grace speak so cheerfully, as if it were possible. "You think Lillie will grow into our ways by and by?" he said inquiringly.

"Well, if we have patience, and give her time. You know, John, that you knew when you took her that she had not been brought up in our ways of living and thinking. Lillie comes from an entirely different set of people from any we are accustomed to; but a man must face all the consequences of his marriage honestly and honorably."

"I know it," said John, with a sigh. "I say, Gracie, do you think the Fergusons like Lillie? I want her to be intimate with them."

"Well, I think they admire her," said Grace evasively, "and feel disposed to be as intimate as she will let them."

"Because," said John, "Rose Ferguson is such a splendid girl; she is so strong, and so generous, and so perfectly true and reliable, — it would be the joy of my heart if Lillie would choose her for a friend."

"Then, pray don't tell her so," said Grace earnestly; "and don't praise her to Lillie, — and, above all things, never hold her up as a pattern, unless you want your wife to hate her."

John opened his eyes very wide. "So!" said he slowly, "I never thought of that. You think she would be jealous?" and John smiled, as men do at the idea that their wives may be jealous, not disliking it on the whole.

"I know *I* should n't be in much charity with a woman my husband proposed to me as a model; that is to say, supposing I had one," said Grace.

"That reminds me," said John, suddenly rising up from the sofa. "Do you know, Gracie, that Colonel Sydenham has come back from his cruise?"

"I had heard of it," said Grace quietly. "Now, John, don't interrupt me. I 'm just going to turn this corner, and must count, — 'one, two, three, four, five, six'" —

John looked at his sister. "How handsome she looks when her cheeks have that color!" he thought. "I wonder if there ever was anything in that affair between them?"

CHAPTER XIV

A GREAT MORAL CONFLICT

"Now, John dear, I have something very particular that I want you to promise me," said Mrs. Lillie, a day or two after the scenes last recorded. Our Lillie had recovered her spirits, and got over her headache, and had come down and done her best to be delightful; and when a very pretty woman, who has all her life studied the art of pleasing, does that, she generally succeeds.

John thought to himself he "didn't care what she was, he loved her;" and that she certainly was the prettiest, most bewitching little creature on earth. He flung his sighs and his doubts and fears to the wind, and suffered himself to be coaxed and cajoled and led captive in the most amiable manner possible. His fair one had a point to carry, — a point that instinct told her was to be managed with great adroitness.

"Well," said John, over his newspaper, "what is this something so very particular?"

"First, sir, put down that paper, and listen to me," said Mrs. Lillie, coming up and seating herself on his knee, and sweeping down the offending paper with an air of authority.

"Yes 'm," said John submissively. "Let 's see, — how was that in the marriage service? I promised to obey, didn't I?"

"Of course you did; that service is always interpreted by contraries, — ever since Eve made Adam mind her in the beginning," said Mrs. Lillie, laughing.

"And got things into a pretty mess in that way," said John; "but come, now, what is it?"

"Well, John, you know the Follingsbees are coming next week?"

"I know it," said John, looking amiable and conciliatory.

"Well, dear, there are some things about our establishment that are not just as I should feel pleased to receive them to."

"Ah!" said John; "why, Lillie, I thought we were fine as a fiddle, from the top of the house to the bottom."

"Oh! it's not the house; the house is splendid. I should n't be in the least ashamed to show it to anybody; but about the table arrangements."

"Now, really, Lillie, what can one have more than real old china and heavy silver plate? I rather pique myself on that; I think it has quite a good, rich, solid old air."

"Well, John, to say the truth, why do we never have any wine? I don't care for it, — I never drink it; but the decanters, and the different colored glasses, and all the apparatus, are such an adornment; and then the Follingsbees are such judges of wine. He imports his own from Spain."

John's face had been hardening down into a firm, decided look while Lillie, stroking his whiskers and playing with his collar, went on with this address. At last he said, "Lillie, I have done almost everything you ever asked; but this one thing I cannot do, — it is a matter of principle. I never drink wine, never have it on my table, never give it, because I have pledged myself not to do it."

"Now, John, here is some more of your Quixotism, is n't it?"

"Well, Lillie, I suppose you will call it so," said John; "but listen to me patiently. My father and I labored for a long time to root out drinking from our village at Spindlewood. It seemed, for the time, as if it would be the

destruction of everything there. The fact was, there was rum in every family: the parents took it daily; the children learned to love and long after it, by seeing the parents, and drinking little sweetened remains at the bottoms of tumblers. There were, every year, families broken up and destroyed, and fine fellows going to the very devil, with this thing; and so we made a movement to form a temperance society. I paid lecturers, and finally lectured myself. At last they said to me: 'It 's all very well for you rich people, that have twice as fine houses and twice as many pleasures as we poor folks, to pick on us for having a little something comfortable to drink in our houses. If we could afford your fine nice wines, and all that, we would n't drink whiskey. You must all have your wine on the table; whiskey is the poor man's wine.' "

"I think," said Lillie, "they were abominably impertinent to talk so to you. I should have told them so."

"Perhaps they thought I was impertinent in talking to them about their private affairs," said John; "but I will tell you what I said to them. I said, 'My good fellows, I will clear my house and table of wine, if you will clear yours of rum.' On this agreement I formed a temperance society; my father and I put our names at the head of the list, and we got every man and boy in Spindlewood. It was a complete victory; and since then, there has n't been a more temperate, thrifty set of people in these United States."

"Did n't your mother object?"

"My mother! no, indeed; I wish you could have known my mother. It was no small sacrifice to her and father. Not that they cared a penny for the wine itself; but the poetry and hospitality of the thing, the fine old cheery associations connected with it, were a real sacrifice. But when we told my mother how it was, she never hesitated a moment. All our cellar of fine old wines was sent

round as presents to hospitals, except a little that we keep for sickness."

"Well, really!" said Lillie in a dry, cool tone, "I suppose it was very good of you, perfectly saintlike and all that, but it does seem a great pity. Why could n't these people take care of themselves? I don't see why you should go on denying yourself, just to keep them in the ways of virtue."

"Oh, it 's no self-denial now! I 'm quite used to it," said John cheerily. "I am young and strong, and just as well as I can be, and don't need wine; in fact, I never think of it. The Fergusons, who are with us in the Spindlewood business, took just the same view of it, and did just as we did; and the Wilcoxes joined us; in fact, all the good old families of our set came into it."

"Well, could n't you, just while the Follingsbees are here, do differently?"

"No, Lillie; there 's my pledge, you see. No; it 's really impossible."

Lillie frowned and looked disconsolate. "John, I really do think you are selfish; you don't seem to have any consideration for me at all. It 's going to make it so disagreeable and uncomfortable for me. The Follingsbees are accustomed to wine every day. I 'm perfectly ashamed not to give it to them."

"Do 'em good to fast awhile, then," said John, laughing like a hard-hearted monster. "You 'll see they won't suffer materially. Bridget makes splendid coffee."

"It 's a shame to laugh at what troubles me, John. The Follingsbees are my friends, and of course I want to treat them handsomely."

"We will treat them just as handsomely as we treat ourselves," said John, "and mortal man or woman ought not to ask more."

"I don't care," said Lillie, after a pause. "I hate all

these moral movements and society questions. They are always in the way of people's having a good time; and I believe the world would wag just as well as it does if nobody had ever thought of them. People will call you a real muff, John."

"How very terrible!" said John, laughing. "What shall I do if I am called a muff? and what a jolly little Mrs. Muff you will be!" he said, pinching her cheek.

"You need n't laugh, John," said Lillie, pouting. "You don't know how things look in fashionable circles. The Follingsbees are in the very highest circle. They have lived in Paris, and been invited by the Emperor."

"I have n't much opinion of Americans who live in Paris and are invited by the Emperor," said John. "But be that as it may, I shall do the best I can for them, and Mr. Young says, 'angels could no more;' so, good-by, puss; I must go to my office; and don't let 's talk about this any more."

And John put on his cap and squared his broad shoulders, and marching off with a resolute stride, went to his office, and had a most uncomfortable morning of it. You see, my dear friends, that though Nature has set the seal of sovereignty on man, in broad shoulders and bushy beard; though he fortify and incase himself in rough overcoats and heavy boots, and walk with a dashing air, and whistle like a free man, we all know it is not an easy thing to wage a warfare with a pretty little creature in lace cap and tiny slippers, who has a faculty of looking very pensive and grieved, and making up a sad little mouth, as if her heart were breaking.

John never doubted that he was right, and in the way of duty; and yet, though he braved it out so stoutly with Lillie, and though he marched out from her presence victoriously, as it were, with drums beating and colors flying, yet there was a dismal sinking of heart under it.

"I 'm right; I know I am. Of course I can't give up here; it 's a matter of principle, of honor," he said over and over to himself. "Perhaps if Lillie had been here I never should have taken such a pledge; but as I have, there 's no help for it."

Then he thought of what Lillie had suggested about its looking niggardly in hospitality, and was angry with himself for feeling uncomfortable. "What do I care what Dick Follingsbee thinks?" said he to himself: "a man that I despise; a cheat, and a swindler, — a man of no principle. Lillie does n't know the sacrifice it is to me to have such people in my house at all. Hang it all! I wish Lillie was a little more like the women I 've been used to, — like Grace and Rose and my mother. But, poor thing, I ought n't to blame her, after all, for her unfortunate bringing up. But it 's so nice to be with women that can understand the grounds you go on. A man never wants to fight a woman. I 'd rather give up, hook and line, and let Lillie have her own way in everything. But then it won't do; a fellow must stop somewhere. Well, I 'll make it up in being a model of civility to these confounded people that I wish were in the Red Sea. Let 's see, I 'll ask Lillie if she don't want to give a party for them when they come. By George! she shall have everything her own way there, — send to New York for the supper, turn the house topsyturvy, illuminate the grounds, and do anything else she can think of. Yes, yes, she shall have carte blanche for everything!"

All which John told Mrs. Lillie when he returned to dinner and found her enacting the depressed wife in a most becoming lace cap and wrapper that made her look like a suffering angel; and the treaty was sealed with many kisses. "You shall have carte blanche, dearest," he said, "for everything but what we were speaking of; and that will content you, won't it?"

And Lillie, with lingering pensiveness, very graciously acknowledged that it would; and seemed so touchingly resigned, and made such a merit of her resignation, that John told her she was an angel; in fact, he had a sort of indistinct remorseful feeling that he was a sort of cruel monster to deny her anything. Lillie had sense enough to see when she could do a thing, and when she could n't. She had given up the case when John went out in the morning, and so accepted the treaty of peace with a good degree of cheerfulness; and she was soon busy discussing the matter. "You see, we 've been invited everywhere, and have n't given anything," she said; "and this will do up our social obligations to everybody here. And then we can show off our rooms; they really are made to give parties in."

"Yes, so they are," said John, delighted to see her smile again; "they seem adapted to that, and I don't doubt you 'll make a brilliant affair of it, Lillie."

"Trust me for that, John," said Lillie. "I 'll show the Follingsbees that something can be done here in Springdale as well as in New York." And so the great question was settled.

CHAPTER XV

THE FOLLINGSBEES ARRIVE

NEXT week the Follingsbees alighted, so to speak, from a cloud of glory. They came in their own carriage, and with their own horses; all in silk and silver, purple and fine linen, "with rings on their fingers and bells on their toes," as the old song has it. We pause to caution our readers that this last clause is to be interpreted metaphorically.

Springdale stood astonished. The quiet, respectable old town had not seen anything like it for many a long day; the hostlers at the hotel talked of it; the boys followed the carriage, and hung on the slats of the fence to see the party alight, and said to one another in their artless vocabulary, "Golly! ain't it bully?"

There was Mr. Dick Follingsbee, with a pair of waxed, tow-colored mustaches like the French Emperor's, and ever so much longer. He was a little, thin, light-colored man, with a yellow complexion and sandy hair; who, with the appendages aforesaid, looked like some kind of large insect, with very long antennæ. There was Mrs. Follingsbee, — a tall, handsome, dark-eyed, dark-haired, dashing woman, French dressed from the tip of her lace parasol to the toe of her boot. There was Mademoiselle Thérèse, the French maid, an inexpressibly fine lady; and there was *la petite* Marie, Mrs. Follingsbee's three-year-old hopeful, a lean, bright-eyed little thing, with a great scarlet bow on her back that made her look like a walking butterfly. On the whole, the tableau of arrival was so

impressive that Bridget and Annie, Rosa and all the kitchen cabinet, were in a breathless state of excitement.

"How do I find you, *ma chère?*" said Mrs. Follingsbee, folding Lillie rapturously to her breast. "I 've been just dying to see you! How lovely everything looks! Oh, *ciel!* how like dear Paris!" she said, as she was conducted into the parlor, and sunk upon the sofa.

"Pretty well done, too, for America!" said Mr. Follingsbee, gazing round, and settling his collar. Mr. Follingsbee was one of the class of returned travelers who always speak condescendingly of anything American; as, "so-so," or "tolerable," or "pretty fair," — a considerateness which goes a long way towards keeping up the spirits of the country.

"I say, Dick," said his lady, "have you seen to the bags and wraps?"

"All right, madam."

"And my basket of medicines and the books?"

"O. K.," replied Dick sententiously.

"Oh! how often must I tell you not to use those odious slang terms?" said his wife reprovingly.

"Oh! Mrs. John Seymour knows me of old," said Mr. Follingsbee, winking facetiously at Lillie. "We 've had many a jolly lark together; have n't we, Lil?"

"Certainly we have," said Lillie affably. "But come, darling," she added to Mrs. Follingsbee, "don't you want to be shown your room?"

"Go it, then, my dearie; and I 'll toddle up with the fol-de-rols and what-you-may-calls," said the incorrigible Dick. "There, wife, Mrs. John Seymour shall go first, so that you sha'n't be jealous of her and me. You know we came pretty near being in interesting relations ourselves at one time; did n't we, now?" he said, with another wink.

It is said that a thorough-paced naturalist can recon-

struct a whole animal from one specimen bone. In like manner, we imagine that, from these few words of dialogue, our expert readers can reconstruct Mr. and Mrs. Follingsbee: he, vulgar, shallow, sharp, keen at a bargain, and utterly without scruples; with a sort of hilarious, animal good nature that was in a state of constant ebullition. He was, as Richard Baxter said of a better man, "always in that state of hilarity that another would be in when he hath taken a cup too much."

Dick Follingsbee began life as a peddler. He was now reputed to be master of untold wealth, kept a yacht and race-horses, ran his own theatre, and patronized the whole world and creation in general with a jocular freedom. Mrs. Follingsbee had been a country girl, with small early advantages, but considerable ambition. She had married Dick Follingsbee, and helped him up in the world, as a clever, ambitious woman may. The last few years she had been spending in Paris, improving her mind and manners in reading Dumas's and Madame George Sand's novels, and availing herself of such outskirt advantages of the court of the Tuileries as industrious, painstaking Americans, not embarrassed by self-respect, may command.

Mrs. Follingsbee, like many another of our republicans who besieged the purlieus of the late empire, felt that a residence near the court, at a time when everything good and decent in France was hiding in obscure corners, and everything parvenu was wide awake and active, entitled her to speak as one having authority concerning French character, French manners and customs. This lady assumed the sentimental literary rôle. She was always cultivating herself in her own way; that is to say, she was assiduous in what she called keeping up her French.

In the opinion of many of her class of thinkers, French is the key of the kingdom of heaven; and, of course, it is worth one's while to sell all that one has to be possessed

of it. Mrs. Follingsbee had not been in the least backward to do this; but as to getting the golden key, she had not succeeded. She had formed the acquaintance of many disreputable people; she had read French novels and French plays such as no well-bred Frenchwoman would suffer in her family; she had lost such innocence and purity of mind as she had to lose, and, after all, had *not* got the French language.

However, there are losses that do not trouble the subject of them, because they bring insensibility. Just as Mrs. Follingsbee's ear was not delicate enough to perceive that her rapid and confident French was not Parisian, so also her conscience and moral sense were not delicate enough to know that she had spent her labor for "that which was not bread." She had only succeeded in acquiring such an air that, on a careless survey, she might have been taken for one of the *demimonde* of Paris; while secretly she imagined herself the fascinating heroine of a French romance.

The friendship between Mrs. Follingsbee and Lillie was of the most impassioned nature; though as both of them were women of a good solid perception in regard to their own material interests, there were excellent reasons on both sides for this enthusiasm.

Notwithstanding the immense wealth of the Follingsbees, there were circles to which Mrs. Follingsbee found it difficult to be admitted. With the usual human perversity, these, of course, became exactly the ones, and the only ones, she particularly cared for. Her ambition was to pass beyond the ranks of the "shoddy" aristocracy to those of the old-established families. Now, the Seymours, the Fergusons, and the Wilcoxes were families of this sort; and none of them had ever cared to conceal the fact that they did not intend to know the Follingsbees. The marriage of Lillie into the Seymour family was the opening of

a door; and Mrs. Follingsbee had been at Lillie's feet during her Newport campaign. On the other hand, Lillie, having taken the sense of the situation at Springdale, had cast her thoughts forward like a discreet young woman, and perceived in advance of her a very dull domestic winter, enlivened only by reading-circles and such slow tea-parties as unsophisticated Springdale found agreeable. The idea of a long visit to the New York alhambra of the Follingsbees in the winter, with balls, parties, unlimited opera-boxes, was not a thing to be disregarded; and so, when Mrs. Follingsbee "*ma chèred*" Lillie, Lillie "my deared" Mrs. Follingsbee: and the pair are to be seen at this blessed moment sitting with their arms tenderly round each other's waists on a *causeuse* in Mrs. Follingsbee's dressing-room.

"You don't know, *mignonne*," said Mrs. Follingsbee, "how perfectly *ravissante* these apartments are! I 'm so glad poor Charlie did them so well for you. I laid my commands on him, poor fellow!"

"Pray, how does your affair with him get on?" said Lillie.

"Oh, dearest! you 've no conception what a trial it is to me to keep him in the bounds of reason. He has such struggles of mind about that stupid wife of his. Think of it, my dear! a man like Charlie Ferrola, all poetry, romance, ideality, tied to a woman who thinks of nothing but her children's teeth and bowels, and turns the whole house into a nursery! Oh, I 've no patience with such people."

"Well, poor fellow! it 's a pity he ever got married," said Lillie.

"Well, it would be all well enough if this sort of woman ever would be reasonable; but they won't. They don't in the least comprehend the necessities of genius. They want to yoke Pegasus to a cart, you see. Now, I understand Charlie perfectly. I could give him that which he

needs. I appreciate him. I make a bower of peace and enjoyment for him, where his artistic nature finds the repose it craves."

"And she pitches into him about you," said Lillie, not slow to perceive the true literal rendering of all this.

"Of course, *ma chère*, — tears him, rends him, lacerates his soul; sometimes he comes to me in the most dreadful states. Really, dear, I have apprehended something quite awful! I should n't in the least be surprised if he should blow his brains out!"

And Mrs. Follingsbee sighed deeply, gave a glance at herself in an opposite mirror, and smoothed down a bow pensively, as the prima donna at the grand opera generally does when her lover is getting ready to stab himself.

"Oh! I don't think he 's going to kill himself," said Mrs. Lillie, who, it must be understood, was secretly somewhat skeptical about the power of her friend's charms, and looked on this little French romance with the eye of an outsider: "never you believe that, dearest. These men make dreadful tearings, and shocking eyes and mouths; but they take pretty good care to keep in the world, after all. You see, if a man 's dead, there 's an end of all things; and I fancy they think of that before they quite come to anything decisive."

"*Chère étourdie*," said Mrs. Follingsbee, regarding Lillie with a pensive smile: "you are just your old self, I see; you are now at the height of your power, — '*jeune Madame, un mari qui vous adore*,' ready to put all things under your feet. How can you feel for a worn, lonely heart like mine, that sighs for congeniality?"

"Bless me, now," said Lillie briskly, "you don't tell me that you 're going to be so silly as to get in love with Charlie yourself! It 's all well enough to keep these fellows on the tragic high ropes; but if a woman falls in love herself, there 's an end of her power. And, darling, just

think of it: you would n't have married that creature if you could; he 's poor as a rat, and always will be; these desperately interesting fellows always are. Now you have money without end; and of course you have position; and your husband is a man you can get anything in the world out of."

"Oh! as to that, I don't complain of Dick," said Mrs. Follingsbee: "he 's coarse and vulgar, to be sure, but he never stands in my way, and I never stand in his; and, as you say, he 's free about money. But still, darling, sometimes it seems to me such a weary thing to live without sympathy of soul! A marriage without congeniality, *mon Dieu*, what is it? And then the harsh, cold laws of human society prevent any relief. They forbid natures that are made for each other from being to each other what they can be."

"You mean that people will talk about you," said Lillie. "Well, I assure you, dearest, they *will* talk awfully, if you are not very careful. I say this to you frankly, as your friend, you know."

"Ah, *ma petite!* you don't need to tell me that. I am careful," said Mrs. Follingsbee. "I am always lecturing Charlie, and showing him that we must keep up *les convenances;* but is it not hard on us poor women to lead always this repressed, secretive life?"

"What made you marry Mr. Follingsbee?" said Lillie, with apparent artlessness.

"Darling, I was but a child. I was ignorant of the mysteries of my own nature, of my capabilities. As Charlie said to me the other day, we never learn what we are till some congenial soul unlocks the secret door of our hearts. The fact is, dearest, that American society, with its strait-laced, puritanical notions, bears terribly hard on woman's heart. Poor Charlie! he is no less one of the victims of society."

"Oh, nonsense!" said Lillie. "You take it too much to heart. You must n't mind all these men say. They are always being desperate and tragic. Charlie has talked just so to me, time and time again. I understand it all. He talked exactly so to me when he came to Newport last summer. You must take matters easy, my dear, — you, with your beauty, and your style, and your money. Why, you can lead all New York captive! Forty fellows like Charlie are not worth spoiling one's dinner for. Come, cheer up; positively, I sha'n't let you be blue, *ma reine.* Let me ring for your maid to dress you for dinner. Au revoir."

The fact was, that Mrs. Lillie, having formerly set down this lovely Charlie on the list of her own adorers, had small sympathy with the sentimental romance of her friend.

"What a fool she makes of herself!" she thought, as she contemplated her own sylphlike figure and wonderful freshness of complexion in the glass. "Don't I know Charlie Ferrola? he wants her to get him into fashionable life, and knows the way to do it. To think of that stout, middle-aged party imagining that Charlie Ferrola 's going to die for her charms! it 's too funny! How stout the dear old thing does get, to be sure!"

It will be observed here that our dear Lillie did not want for perspicacity. There is nothing so absolutely clear-sighted, in certain directions, as selfishness. Entire want of sympathy with others clears up one's vision astonishingly, and enables us to see all the weak points and ridiculous places of our neighbors in the most accurate manner possible.

As to Mr. Charlie Ferrola, our Lillie was certainly in the right in respect to him. He was one of those blossoms of male humanity that seem as expressly designed by nature for the ornamentation of ladies' boudoirs as an Italian greyhound: he had precisely the same graceful,

shivery adaptation to live by petting and caresses. His tastes were all so exquisite that it was the most difficult thing in the world to keep him out of misery a moment. He was in a chronic state of disgust with something or other in our lower world from morning till night.

His profession was nominally that of architecture and landscape gardening, but, in point of fact, consisted in telling certain rich, *blasé*, stupid, fashionable people how they could quickest get rid of their money. He ruled despotically in the Follingsbee halls: he bought and rejected pictures and jewelry, ordered and sent off furniture, with the air of an absolute master; amusing himself meanwhile with running a French romance with the handsome mistress of the establishment. As a consequence, he had not only opportunities for much quiet feathering of his own nest, but the éclat of always having the use of the Follingsbees' carriages, horses, and opera-boxes, and being the acknowledged and supreme head of fashionable dictation. Ladies sometimes pull caps for such charming individuals, as we have seen in the case of Mrs. Follingsbee and Lillie. For it is not to be supposed that Mrs. Follingsbee, though she had assumed the gushing style with her young friend, wanted spirit or perception on her part. Her darling Lillie had left a nettle in her bosom which rankled there.

"The vanity of these thin, light, watery blondes!" she said to herself, as she looked into her own great dark eyes in the mirror, — "thinking Charlie Ferrola cares for her! I know just what he thinks of *her*, thank Heaven! Poor thing! Don't you think Mrs. John Seymour has gone off astonishingly since her marriage?" she said to Thérèse.

"*Mon Dieu, madame, q'oui,*" said the obedient tire-woman, scraping the very back of her throat in her zeal. "Madame Seymour has the real American *maigreur*. These thin women, madame, they have no substance;

there is noting to them. For young girl they are charming, but as woman they are just noting at all. Now, you will see, madame, what I tell you. In a year or two people shall ask, 'Was she ever handsome?' But you, madame, you come to your prime like great rose! Oh, dere is no comparison of you to Mrs. John Seymour!"

And Thérèse found her words highly acceptable, after the manner of all her tribe, who prophesy smooth things unto their mistresses.

It may be imagined that the entertaining of Dick Follingsbee was no small strain on the conjugal endurance of our faithful John; but he was on duty, and endured without flinching that gentleman's free and easy jokes and patronizing civilities.

"I do wish, darling, you'd teach that creature not to call you 'Lillie' in that abominably free manner," he said to his wife, the first day, after dinner.

"Mercy on us, John! what can I do? All the world knows that Dick Follingsbee's an oddity; and everybody agrees to take what he says for what it's worth. If I should go to putting on any airs, he'd behave ten times worse than he does: the only way is, to pass it over quietly, and not to seem to notice anything he says or does. My way is, to smile, and look gracious, and act as if I hadn't heard anything but what is perfectly proper."

"It's a tremendous infliction, Lillie!"

"Poor man! is it?" said Lillie, putting her arm round his neck, and stroking his whiskers. "Well, now, he's a good man to bear it so well, so he is; and they sha'n't plague him long. But, John, you must confess Mrs. Follingsbee is nice: poor woman! she is mortified with the way Dick will go on; but she can't do anything with him."

"Yes, I can get on with her," said John. In fact, John was one of the men so loyal to women that his path

of virtue in regard to them always ran downhill. Mrs. Follingsbee was handsome, and had a gift in language, and some considerable tact in adapting herself to her society; and as she put forth all her powers to win his admiration, she succeeded.

Grace had done her part to assist John in his hospitable intents, by securing the prompt coöperation of the Fergusons. The very first evening after their arrival, old Mrs. Ferguson, with Letitia and Rose, called, not formally but socially, as had always been the custom of the two families. Dick Follingsbee was out, enjoying an evening cigar, — a circumstance on which John secretly congratulated himself as a favorable feature in the case. He felt instinctively a sort of uneasy responsibility for his guests, and judging the Fergusons by himself, felt that their call was in some sort an act of self-abnegation on his account; and he was anxious to make it as easy as possible. Mrs. Follingsbee was presentable, so he thought; but he dreaded the irrepressible Dick, and had much the same feeling about him that one has on presenting a pet spaniel or pointer in a lady's parlor, — there was no answering for what he might say or do.

The Fergusons were disposed to make themselves most amiable to Mrs. Follingsbee; and with this intent, Miss Letitia started the subject of her Parisian experiences, as being probably one where she would feel herself especially at home. Mrs. Follingsbee of course expanded in rapturous description, and was quite clever and interesting.

"You must feel quite a difference between that country and this, in regard to facilities of living," said Miss Letitia.

"Ah, indeed! do I not?" said Mrs. Follingsbee, casting up her eyes. "Life here in America is in a state of perfect disorganization."

"We are a young people here, madam," said John.

"We have n't had time to organize the smaller conveniences of life."

"Yes, that 's what I mean," said Mrs. Follingsbee. "Now, you men don't feel it so very much; but it bears hard on us poor women. Life here in America is perfect slavery to women, — a perfect dead grind. You see, there 's no career at all for a married woman in this country, as there is in France. Marriage there opens a brilliant prospect before a girl; it introduces her to the world; it gives her wings. In America it is clipping her wings, chaining her down, shutting her up, — no more gayety, no more admiration; nothing but cradles and cribs, and bibs and tuckers, little narrowing, wearing, domestic cares, hard, vulgar domestic slaveries: and so our women lose their bloom and health and freshness, and are moped to death."

"I can't see the thing in that light, Mrs. Follingsbee," said old Mrs. Ferguson. "I don't understand this modern talk. I am sure, for one, I can say I have had all the career I wanted ever since I married. You know, dear, when one begins to have children, one's heart goes into them: we find nothing hard that we do for the dear little things. I 've heard that the Parisian ladies never nurse their own babies. From my very heart, I pity them."

"Oh, my dear madam!" said Mrs. Follingsbee, "why insist upon it that a cultivated, intelligent woman shall waste some of the most beautiful years of her life in a mere animal function, that, after all, any healthy peasant can perform better than she? The French are a philosophical nation; and in Paris, you see, this thing is all systematic; it 's altogether better for the child. It 's taken to the country, and put to nurse with a good strong woman, who makes that her only business. She just lives to be a good animal, you see, and so is a better one than a more intellectual being can be; thus she gives the child a strong constitution, which is the main thing."

"Yes," said Miss Letitia; "I was told, when in Paris, that this system is universal. The dressmaker, who works at so much a day, sends her child out to nurse as certainly as the woman of rank and fashion. There are no babies, as a rule, in French households."

"And you see how good this is for the mother," said Mrs. Follingsbee. "The first year or two of a child's life it is nothing but a little animal; and one person can do for it about as well as another; and all this time, while it is growing physically, the mother has for art, for self-cultivation, for society, and for literature. Of course she keeps her eye on her child, and visits it often enough to know that all goes right with it."

"Yes," said Miss Letitia; "and the same philosophical spirit regulates the education of the child throughout. An American gentleman, who wished to live in Paris, told me that, having searched all over it, he could not accommodate his family, including himself and wife and two children, without taking two of the suites that are usually let to one family. The reason, he inferred, was the perfection of the system which keeps the French family reduced in numbers. The babies are out at nurse, sometimes till two, and sometimes till three years of age; and at seven or eight, the girl goes into a pension and the boy into a college, till they are ready to be taken out, — the girl to be married, and the boy to enter a profession; so the leisure of parents for literature, art, and society is preserved."

"It seems to me the most perfectly dreary, dreadful way of living I ever heard of," said Mrs. Ferguson, with unwonted energy. "How I pity people who know so little of real happiness!"

"Yet the French are dotingly fond of children," said Mrs. Follingsbee. "It's a national peculiarity; you can see it in all their literature. Don't you remember Victor Hugo's exquisite description of a mother's feelings for a

little child in 'Notre Dame de Paris'? I never read anything more affecting; it's perfectly subduing."

"They can't love their children as I did mine," said Mrs. Ferguson — "it's impossible; and if that's what's called organizing society, I hope our society in America never will be organized. It can't be that children are well taken care of on that system. I always attended to everything for my babies myself; because I felt God had put them into my hands perfectly helpless; and if there is anything difficult or disagreeable in the case, how can I expect to hire a woman for money to be faithful in what I cannot do for love?"

"But don't you think, dear madam, that this system of personal devotion to children may be carried too far?" said Mrs. Follingsbee. "Perhaps in France they may go to an extreme; but don't our American women, as a rule, sacrifice themselves too much to their families?"

"Sacrifice!" said Mrs. Ferguson. "How can we? Our children are our new life. We live in them a thousand times more than we could in ourselves. No, I think a mother that doesn't take care of her own baby misses the greatest happiness a woman can know. A baby isn't a mere animal; and it is a great and solemn thing to see the coming of an immortal soul into it from day to day. My very happiest hours have been spent with my babies in my arms."

"There may be women constituted so as to enjoy it," said Mrs. Follingsbee; "but you must allow that there is a vast difference among women."

"There certainly is," said Mrs. Ferguson, as she rose with a frigid curtsy, and shortened the call. "My dear girls," said the old lady to her daughters, when they returned home, "I disapprove of that woman. I am very sorry that pretty little Mrs. Seymour has so bad a friend and adviser. Why, the woman talks like a Fejee Islander!

Baby a mere animal, to be sure! it puts me out of temper to hear such talk. The woman talks as if she had never heard of such a thing as love in her life, and don't know what it means."

"Oh, well, mamma!" said Rose, "you know we are old-fashioned folks, and not up to modern improvements."

"Well," said Miss Letitia, "I should think that that poor little weird child of Mrs. Follingsbee's, with the great red bow on her back, had been brought up on this system. Yesterday afternoon I saw her in the garden, with that maid of hers, apparently enjoying a free fight. They looked like a pair of goblins, — an old and a young one. I never saw anything like it."

"What a pity!" said Rose; "for she 's a smart, bright little thing; and it 's cunning to hear her talk French."

"Well," said Mrs. Ferguson, straightening her back, and sitting up with a grand air, "I am one of eight children that my mother nursed herself at her own breast, and lived to a good honorable old age after it. People called her a handsome woman at sixty: she could ride and walk and dance with the best; and nobody kept up a keener interest in reading or general literature. Her conversation was sought by the most eminent men of the day as something remarkable. She was always with her children: we always knew we had her to run to at any moment; and we were the first thing with her. She lived a happy, loving, useful life; and her children rose up and called her blessed."

"As we do you, dear mamma," said Rose, kissing her; "so don't be oratorical, darling mammy, because we are all of your mind here."

CHAPTER XVI

MRS. JOHN SEYMOUR'S PARTY, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

Mrs. John Seymour's party marked an era in the annals of Springdale. Of this you may be sure, my dear reader, when you consider that it was projected and arranged by Mrs. Lillie, in strict council with her friend Mrs. Follingsbee, who had lived in Paris, and been to balls at the Tuileries. Of course, it was a tip-top New-York-Paris party, with all the new, fashionable, unspeakable crinkles and wrinkles, all the high, divine, spick and span new ways of doing things; which, however, like the Eleusinian mysteries, being in their very nature incommunicable except to the elect, must be left to the imagination.

A French artiste, whom Mrs. Follingsbee patronized as "my confectioner," came in state to Springdale with a retinue of appendages and servants sufficient for a circus; took formal possession of the Seymour mansion, and became, for the time being, absolute dictator, as was customary in the old Roman Republic in times of emergency.

Mr. Follingsbee was forward, fussy, and advisory, in his own peculiar free-and-easy fashion; and Mrs. Follingsbee was instructive and patronizing to the very last degree. Lillie had bewailed in her sympathizing bosom John's unaccountable and most singular moral Quixotism in regard to the wine question, and been comforted by her appreciative discourse. Mrs. Follingsbee had a sort of indefinite faith in French phrases for mending all the broken places in life. A thing said partly in French became at once in her view elucidated, even though the words meant no more

than the same in English; so she consoled Lillie as follows: —

"Oh, *ma chère!* I understand perfectly: your husband may be '*un peu borné*,' as they say in Paris, but still '*un homme très respectable*,'" — Mrs. Follingsbee here scraped her throat emphatically, just as her French maid did, — "a sublime example of the virtues; and let me tell you, darling, you are very fortunate to get such a man. It is not often that a woman can get an establishment like yours, and a good man into the bargain; so, if the goodness is a little *ennuyeuse*, one must put up with it. Then, again, people of old established standing may do about what they like socially: their position is made. People only say, 'Well, that is their way; the Seymours will do so and so.' Now, we have to do twice as much of everything to make our position, as certain other people do. We might flood our place with champagne and Burgundy, and get all the young fellows drunk, as we generally do; and yet people will call our parties '*bourgeois*,' and yours '*recherché*,' if you give them nothing but tea and biscuit. Now, there 's my Dick: he respects your husband; you can see he does. In his odious slang way, he says he 's 'some,' and 'a brick;' and he 's a little anxious to please him, though he professes not to care for anybody. Now, Dick has pretty sharp sense, after all, or he 'd never have been just where he is."

Our friend John, during these days preceding the party, the party itself, and the clearing up after it, enacted submissively that part of unconditional surrender which the master of the house, if well trained, generally acts on such occasions. He resembled the prize ox, which is led forth adorned with garlands, ribbons, and docility, to grace a triumphal procession. He went where he was told, did as he was bid, marched to the right, marched to the left, put on gloves and cravat, and took them off, entirely submis-

sive to the word of his little general; and exhibited, in short, an edifying spectacle of that pleasant domestic animal, a tame husband. He had to make atonement for being a reformer and for endeavoring to live like a Christian, by conceding to his wife all this latitude of indulgence; and he meant to go through it like a man and a philosopher. To be sure, in his eyes, it was all so much unutterable bosh and nonsense; and bosh and nonsense for which he was eventually to settle the bills; but he armed himself with the patient reflection that all things have their end in time, — that fireworks and Chinese lanterns, bands of music and kid gloves, ruffs and puffs, and pinkings and quillings, and all sorts of unspeakable eatables with French names, would erelong float down the stream of time, and leave their record only in a few bad colds and days of indigestion, which also time would mercifully cure.

So John steadied his soul with a view of that comfortable future, when all this fuss should be over, and the coast cleared for something better. Moreover, John found this good result of his patience: that he learned a little something in a Christian way by it. Men of elevated principle and moral honesty often treat themselves to such large slices of contempt and indignation, in regard to the rogues of society, as to forget a common brotherhood of pity. It is sometimes wholesome for such men to be obliged to tolerate a scamp to the extent of exchanging with him the ordinary benevolences of social life.

John, in discharging the duty of a host to Dick Follingsbee, found himself, after a while, looking on him with pity, as a poor creature, like the rich fool in the Gospels, without faith or love or prayer; spending life as a moth does, — in vain attempts to burn himself up in the candle, and knowing nothing better. In fact, after a while, the stiff, tow-colored mustache, smart stride, and flippant air

of this poor little man struck him somewhere in the region between a smile and a tear; and his enforced hospitality began to wear a tincture of real kindness. There is no less pathos in moral than in physical imbecility.

It is an observable social phenomenon that, when any family in a community makes an advance very greatly ahead of its neighbors in style of living or splendor of entertainments, the fact causes great searchings of spirit in all the region round about, and abundance of talk, wherein the thoughts of many hearts are revealed.

Springdale was a country town, containing a choice knot of the old, respectable, "true-blue," Boston-aristocracy families. Two or three of them had winter houses in Beacon Street, and went there, after Christmas, to enjoy the lectures, concerts, and select gayeties of the modern Athens; others, like the Fergusons and Seymours, were in intimate relationship with the same circle.

Now, it is well known that the real old true-blue, Simon-pure, Boston family is one whose claims to be considered "the thing," and the only thing, are somewhat like the claim of apostolic succession in ancient churches. It is easy to see why certain affluent, cultivated, and eminently well-conducted people should be considered "the thing" in their day and generation; but why they should be considered as the "only thing" is the point insoluble to human reason, and to be received by faith alone; also, why certain other people, equally affluent, cultivated, and well conducted, are *not* "the thing" is one of the divine mysteries, about which whoso observes Boston society will do well not too curiously to exercise his reason.

These true-blue families, however, have claims to respectability; which make them, on the whole, quite a venerable and pleasurable feature of society in our young, topsyturvy, American community. Some of them have family records extending clearly back to the settlement of

Massachusetts Bay; and the family estate is still on grounds first cleared up by aboriginal settlers. Being of a Puritan nobility, they have an ancestral record, affording more legitimate subject of family self-esteem than most other nobility. Their history runs back to an ancestry of unworldly faith and prayer and self-denial, of incorruptible public virtue, sturdy resistance of evil, and pursuit of good.

There is also a literary aroma pervading their circles. Dim suggestions of "The North American Review," of "The Dial," of Cambridge, — a sort of vague *mielfleur* of authorship and poetry, — are supposed to float in the air around them; and it is generally understood that in their homes exist tastes and appreciations denied to less favored regions. Almost every one of them has its great man, — its father, grandfather, cousin, or great-uncle, who wrote a book, or edited a review, or was a President of the United States, or minister to England, whose opinions are referred to by the family in any discussion, as good Christians quote the Bible.

It is true that, in some few instances, the *pleroma* of aristocratic dignity undergoes a sort of acetic fermentation, and comes out in ungenial qualities. Now and then, at a public watering-place, a man or woman appears no otherwise distinguished than by a remarkable talent for being disagreeable; and it is amusing to find, on inquiry, that this repulsiveness of demeanor is entirely on account of belonging to an ancient family.

Such is the tendency of democracy to a general mingling of elements, that this frigidity is deemed necessary by these good souls to prevent the commonalty from being attracted by them, and sticking to them, as straws and bits of paper do to amber. But more generally the true-blue old families are simple and urbane in their manners; and their pretensions are, as Miss Edgeworth says, presented rather intaglio than in cameo. Of course, they

most thoroughly believe in themselves, but in a bland and genial way. *Noblesse oblige* is with them a secret spring of gentle address and social suavity. They prefer their own set and their own ways, and are comfortably sure that what they do not know is not worth knowing, and what they have not been in the habit of doing is not worth doing; but still they are indulgent of the existence of human nature outside of their own circle.

The Seymours and the Fergusons belonged to this sort of people; and, of course, Mr. John Seymour's marriage afforded them opportunity for some wholesome moral discipline. The Ferguson girls were frank, social, magnanimous young women; of that class to whom the saying or doing of a rude or unhandsome thing by any human being was an utter impossibility, and whose cheeks would flush at the mere idea of asserting personal superiority over any one. Nevertheless, they trod the earth firmly, as girls who felt that they were born to a certain position. Judge Ferguson was a gentleman of the old school, devoted to past ideas, fond of the English classics, and with small faith in any literature later than Dr. Johnson. He confessed to a toleration for Scott's novels, and had been detected by his children both laughing and crying over the stories of Charles Dickens; for the amiable weaknesses of human nature still remain in the best regulated mind. To women and children the judge was benignity itself, imitating the Grand Monarque, who bowed even to a chambermaid. He believed in good, orderly, respectable, old ways and entertainments, and had a quiet horror of all that is loud or noisy or pretentious; which sometimes made his social duties a trial to him, as was the case in regard to the Seymour party.

The arrangements of the party, including the preparations for an extensive illumination of the grounds, and fireworks, were on so unusual a scale as to rouse the whole

community of Springdale to a fever of excitement; of course, the Wilcoxes and the Lennoxes were astonished and disgusted. When had it been known that any of their set had done anything of the kind? How horribly out of taste! Just the result of John Seymour's marrying into that class of society! Mrs. Lennox was of opinion that she ought not to go. She was of the determined and spicy order of human beings, and often, like a certain French countess, felt disposed to thank Heaven that she generally succeeded in being rude when the occasion required. Mrs. Lennox regarded "snubbing" in the light of a moral duty devolving on people of condition, when the foundations of things were in danger of being removed by the inroads of the vulgar commonalty. On the present occasion, Mrs. Lennox was of opinion that quiet, respectable people, of good family, ought to ignore this kind of proceeding, and not think of encouraging such things by their presence.

Mrs. Wilcox generally shaped her course by Mrs. Lennox: still she had promised Letitia Ferguson to be gracious to the Seymours in their exigency, and to call on the Follingsbees; so there was confusion all round. The young people of both families declared that they were going, just to see the fun. Bob Lennox, with the usual vivacity of Young America, said he did n't "care a hang who set a ball rolling, if only something was kept stirring." The subject was discussed when Mrs. Lennox and Mrs. Wilcox were making a morning call upon the Fergusons.

"For my part," said Mrs. Lennox, "I 'm principled on this subject. Those Follingsbees are not proper people. They are of just that vulgar, pushing class, against which I feel it my duty to set my face like a flint; and I 'm astonished that a man like John Seymour should go into relations with them. You see, it puts all his friends in a most embarrassing position."

"Dear Mrs. Lennox," said Rose Ferguson, "indeed, it is not Mr. Seymour's fault. These persons are invited by his wife."

"Well, what business has he to allow his wife to invite them? A man should be master in his own house."

"But, my dear Mrs. Lennox," said Mrs. Ferguson, "such a pretty young creature, and just married! of course it would be unhandsome not to allow her to have her friends."

"Certainly," said Judge Ferguson, "a gentleman cannot be rude to his wife's invited guests; for my part, I think Seymour is putting the best face he can on it; and we must all do what we can to help him. We shall all attend the Seymour party."

"Well," said Mrs. Wilcox, "I think we shall go. To be sure, it is not what I should like to do. I don't approve of these Follingsbees. Mr. Wilcox was saying, this morning, that Follingsbee's money was made by frauds on the government, which ought to have put him in the state prison."

"Now, I say," said Mrs. Lennox, "such people ought to be put down socially: I have no patience with their airs. And that Mrs. Follingsbee, I have heard that she was a milliner, or shop-girl, or some such thing; and to see the airs she gives herself! One would think it was the Empress Eugénie herself, come to queen it over us in America. I can't help thinking we ought to take a stand. I really do."

"But, dear Mrs. Lennox, we are not obliged to cultivate further relations with people, simply from exchanging ordinary civilities with them on one evening," said Judge Ferguson.

"But, my dear sir, these pushing, vulgar, rich people take advantage of every opening. Give them an inch, and they will take an ell," said Mrs. Lennox. "Now, if I

go, they will be claiming acquaintance with me in Newport next summer. Well, I shall cut them, — dead."

"Trust you for that," said Miss Letitia, laughing; "indeed, Mrs. Lennox, I think you may go wherever you please with perfect safety. People will never saddle themselves on you longer than you want them; so you might as well go to the party with the rest of us."

"And besides, you know," said Mrs. Wilcox, "all our young people will go whether we go or not. Your Tom was at my house yesterday; and he is going with my girls: they are all just as wild about it as they can be, and say that it is the greatest fun that has been heard of this summer."

In fact, there was not a man, woman, or child, in a circle of fifteen miles round, who could show shade or color of an invitation, who was not out in full dress at Mrs. John Seymour's party. People in a city may pick and choose their entertainments, and she who gives a party there may reckon on a falling off of about one third, for various other attractions; but in the country, where there is nothing else stirring, one may be sure that not one person able to stand on his feet will be missing. A party in a good old sleepy, respectable country place is a godsend. It is equal to an earthquake for suggesting materials of conversation; and in so many ways does it awaken and vivify the community, that one may doubt whether, after all, it is not a moral benefaction, and the giver of it one to be ranked in the noble army of martyrs.

Everybody went. Even Mrs. Lennox, when she had sufficiently swallowed her moral principles, sent in all haste to New York for an elegant spick and span new dress from Madame de Tullegig's, expressly for the occasion. Was she to be outshone by unprincipled upstarts? Perish the thought! It was treason to the cause of virtue and the standing order of society. Of course the best thing to be

done is to put certain people down, if you can; but if you cannot do that, the next best thing is to outshine them in their own way. It may be very naughty for them to be so dressy and extravagant, and very absurd, improper, immoral, unnecessary, and in bad taste; but still, if you cannot help it, you may as well try to do the same, and do a little more of it. Mrs. Lennox was in a feverish state till all her trappings came from New York. The bill was something stunning; but then, it was voted by the young people that she had never looked so splendidly in her life; and she comforted herself with marking out a certain sublime distance and reserve of manner to be observed towards Mrs. Seymour and the Follingsbees.

The young people, however, came home delighted. Tom, aged twenty-two, instructed his mother that Follingsbee was a brick, and a real jolly fellow; and he had accepted an invitation to go on a yachting cruise with him the next month. Jane Lennox, moreover, began besetting her mother to have certain details in their house rearranged, with an eye to the Seymour glorification.

"Now, Jane dear, that 's just the result of allowing you to visit in this flash, vulgar genteel society," said the troubled mamma.

"Bless your heart, mamma, the world moves on, you know; and we must move with it a little, or be left behind. For my part, I 'm perfectly ashamed of the way we let things go at our house. It really is not respectable. Now, I like Mrs. Follingsbee, for my part: she 's clever and amusing. It was fun to hear all about the balls at the Tuileries, and the opera and things in Paris. Mamma, when are we going to Paris?"

"Oh! I don't know, my dear; you must ask your father. He is very unwilling to go abroad."

"Papa is so slow and conservative in his notions!" said the young lady. "For my part, I cannot see what is the

use of all this talk about the Follingsbees. He is good-natured and funny; and I am sure I think she 's a splendid woman: and, by the way, she gave me the address of lots of places in New York where we can get French things. Did you notice her lace? It is superb; and she told me where lace just like it could be bought one third less than they sell at Stewart's."

Thus we see how the starting-out of an old, respectable family in any new ebullition of fancy and fashion is like a dandelion going to seed. You have not only the airy, fairy globe, but every feathery particle thereof bears a germ which will cause similar feather bubbles all over the country; and thus old, respectable grass-plots become, in time, half dandelion. It is to be observed that, in all questions of life and fashion, "the world and the flesh," to say nothing of the third partner of that ancient firm, have us at decided advantage. It is easy to see the flash of jewelry, the dazzle of color, the rush and glitter of equipage, and to be dizzied by the babble and gayety of fashionable life; while it is not easy to see justice, patience, temperance, self-denial. These are things belonging to the invisible and the eternal, and to be seen with other eyes than those of the body.

Then, again, there is no one thing in all the items which go to make up fashionable extravagance, which, taken separately and by itself, is not in some point of view a good or pretty or desirable thing; and so, whenever the forces of invisible morality begin an encounter with the troops of fashion and folly, the world and the flesh, as we have just said, generally have the best of it.

It may be very shocking and dreadful to get money by cheating and lying; but when the money thus got is put into the forms of yachts, operas, pictures, statues, and splendid entertainments, of which you are freely offered a share if you will only cultivate the acquaintance of a

sharper, will you not then begin to say, "Everybody is going, why not I? As to countenancing Dives, why, he is countenanced; and my holding out does no good. What is the use of my sitting in my corner and sulking? Nobody minds me." Thus Dives gains one after another to follow his chariot, and make up his court.

Our friend John, simply by being a loving, indulgent husband, had come into the position, in some measure, of demoralizing the public conscience, of bringing in luxury and extravagance, and countenancing people who really ought not to be countenanced. He had a sort of uneasy perception of this fact; yet at each particular step he seemed to himself to be doing no more than was right or reasonable. It was a fact that, through all Springdale, people were beginning to be uneasy and uncomfortable in houses that used to seem to them nice enough, and ashamed of a style of dress and entertainment and living that used to content them perfectly, simply because of the changes of style and living in the John Seymour mansion.

Of old, the Seymour family had always been a bulwark on the side of a temperate self-restraint and reticence in worldly indulgence; of a kind that parents find most useful to strengthen their hands when children are urging them on to expenses beyond their means: for they could say, "The Seymours are richer than we are, and you see they don't change their carpets, nor get new sofas, nor give extravagant parties; and they give simple, reasonable, quiet entertainments, and do not go into any modern follies." So the Seymours kept up the Fergusons, and the Fergusons the Seymours; and the Wilcoxes and the Lennoxes encouraged each other in a style of quiet, reasonable living, saving money for charity, and time for reading and self-cultivation, and by moderation and simplicity keeping up the courage of less wealthy neighbors to hold their own with them.

The John Seymour party, therefore, was like the bursting of a great dam, which floods a whole region. There was not a family who had not some trouble with the inundation, even where, like Rose and Letitia Ferguson, they swept it out merrily, and thought no more of it.

"It was all very pretty and pleasant, and I 'm glad it went off so well," said Rose Ferguson the next day; "but I have not the smallest desire to repeat anything of the kind. We who live in the country, and have such a world of beautiful things around us every day, and so many charming engagements in riding, walking, and rambling, and so much to do, cannot afford to go into this sort of thing: we really have not time for it."

"That pretty creature," said Mrs. Ferguson, speaking of Lillie, "is really a charming object. I hope she will settle down now to domestic life. She will soon find better things to care for, I trust: a baby would be her best teacher. I am sure I hope she will have one."

"A baby is mamma's infallible recipe for strengthening the character," said Rose, laughing.

"Well, as the saying is, they bring love with them," said Mrs. Ferguson; "and love always brings wisdom."

CHAPTER XVII

AFTER THE BATTLE

"WELL, Grace, the Follingsbees are gone at last, I am thankful to say," said John, as he stretched himself out on the sofa in Grace's parlor with a sigh of relief. "If ever I am caught in such a scrape again, I shall know it."

"Yes, it is all well over," said Grace.

"Over! I wish you would look at the bills. Why, Gracie! I had not the least idea, when I gave Lillie leave to get what she chose, what it would come to, with those people at her elbow, to put things into her head. I could not interfere, you know, after the thing was started; and I thought I would not spoil Lillie's pleasure, especially as I had to stand firm in not allowing wine. It was well I did; for if wine had been given, and taken with the reckless freedom that all the rest was, it might have ended in a general riot."

"As some of the great fashionable parties do, where young women get merry with champagne, and young men get drunk," said Grace.

"Well," said John, "I don't exactly like the whole turn of the way things have been going at our house lately. I don't like the influence of it on others. It is not in the line of the life I want to lead, and that we have all been trying to lead."

"Well," said Grace, "things will be settled now quietly, I hope."

"I say," said John, "could not we start our little reading sociables, that were so pleasant last year? You know

we want to keep some little pleasant thing going, and draw Lillie in with us. When a girl has been used to lively society, she can't come down to mere nothing; and I am afraid she will be wanting to rush off to New York, and visit the Follingsbees."

"Well," said Grace, "Letitia and Rose were speaking the other day of that, and wanting to begin. You know we were to read Froude together, as soon as the evenings got a little longer."

"Oh yes! that will be capital," said John.

"Do you think Lillie will be interested in Froude?" asked Grace.

"I really can't say," said John, with some doubting of heart; "perhaps it would be well to begin with something a little lighter at first."

"Anything you please, John. What shall it be?"

"But I don't want to hold you all back on my account," said John.

"Well, then again, John, there's our old study club. The Fergusons and Mr. Mathews were talking it over the other night, and wondering when you would be ready to join us. We were going to take up Lecky's 'History of Morals,' and have our sessions Tuesday evenings, — one Tuesday at their house, and the other at mine, you know."

"I should enjoy that, of all things," said John; "but I know it is of no use to ask Lillie: it would only be the most dreadful bore to her."

"And you couldn't come without her, of course," said Grace.

"Of course not; that would be too cruel, to leave the poor little thing at home alone."

"Lillie strikes me as being naturally clever," said Grace; "if she only would bring her mind to enter into your tastes a little, I'm sure you would find her capable."

"But, Gracie, you 've no conception how very different her sphere of thought is, how entirely out of the line of our ways of thinking. I 'll tell you," said John, "don't wait for me. You have your Tuesdays, and go on with your Lecky; and I will keep a copy at home, and read up with you. And I will bring Lillie in the evening, after the reading is over; and we will have a little music and lively talk, and a dance or charade, you know: then perhaps her mind will wake up by degrees."

SCENE. — *After tea in the Seymour parlor.* JOHN *at a table, reading.* LILLIE *in a corner, embroidering.*

Lillie. "Look here, John, I want to ask you something."

John, putting down his book, and crossing to her, "Well, dear?"

Lillie. "There, would you make a green leaf there, or a brown one?"

John, endeavoring to look wise. "Well, a brown one."

Lillie. "That 's just like you, John; now, don't you see that a brown one would just spoil the effect?"

"Oh! would it?" said John innocently. "Well, what did you ask me for?"

"Why, you tiresome creature! I wanted you to say something. What are you sitting moping over a book for? You don't entertain me a bit."

"Dear Lillie, I have been talking about everything I could think of," said John apologetically.

"Well, I want you to keep on talking, and put up that great heavy book. What is it, anyway?"

"Lecky's 'History of Morals,'" said John.

"How dreadful! do you really mean to read it?"

"Certainly; we are all reading it."

"Who all?"

"Why, Gracie, and Letitia and Rose Ferguson."

"Rose Ferguson? I don't believe it. Why, Rose is too young! She cannot care about such stuff."

"She does care, and enjoys it, too," said John eagerly.

"It is a pity, then, you did n't get her for a wife instead of me," said Lillie in a tone of pique.

Now, this sort of thing does well enough occasionally, said by a pretty woman, perfectly sure of her ground, in the early days of the honeymoon, but for steady domestic diet is not to be recommended. Husbands get tired of swearing allegiance over and over; and John returned to his book quietly, without reply. He did not like the suggestion; and he thought that it was in very poor taste. Lillie embroidered in silence a few minutes. and then threw down her work pettishly.

"How close this room is!"

John read on.

"John, do open the door!"

John rose, opened the door, and returned to his book.

"Now, there 's that draft from the hall window. John, you 'll have to shut the door."

John shut it, and read on.

"Oh, dear me!" said Lillie, throwing herself down with a portentous yawn. "I do think this is dreadful!"

"What is dreadful?" said John, looking up.

"It is dreadful to be buried alive here in this gloomy town of Springdale, where there is nothing to see, and nowhere to go, and nothing going on."

"We have always flattered ourselves that Springdale was a most attractive place," said John. "I don't know of any place where there are more beautiful walks and rambles."

"But I detest walking in the country. What is there to see? And you get your shoes muddy, and burs on your clothes, and don't meet a creature! I got so tired the other day when Grace and Rose Ferguson would drag me off to what they call 'the glen.' They kept oh-ing

and ah-ing and exclaiming to each other about some stupid thing every step of the way, — old poky nutgalls, bare twigs of trees, and red and yellow leaves, and ferns! I do wish you could have seen the armful of trash that those two girls carried into their respective houses. I would not have such stuff in mine for anything. I am tired of all this talk about nature. I am free to confess that I don't like nature, and do like art; and I wish we only lived in New York, where there is something to amuse one."

"Well, Lillie dear, I am sorry; but we don't live in New York, and are not likely to," said John.

"Why can't we? Mrs. Follingsbee said that a man in your profession, and with your talents, could command a fortune in New York."

"If it would give me the mines of Golconda, I would not go there," said John.

"How stupid of you! You know you would, though."

"No, Lillie; I would not leave Springdale for any money."

"That is because you think of nobody but yourself," said Lillie. "Men are always selfish."

"On the contrary, it is because I have so many here depending on me, of whom I am bound to think more than myself," said John.

"That dreadful mission work of yours, I suppose," said Lillie; "that always stands in the way of having a good time."

"Lillie," said John, shutting his book, and looking at her, "what is your ideal of a good time?"

"Why, having something amusing going on all the time, — something bright and lively, to keep one in good spirits," said Lillie.

"I thought that you would have enough of that with your party and all," said John.

"Well, now it's all over, and duller than ever," said

Lillie. "I think a little spurt of gayety makes it seem duller by contrast."

"Yet, Lillie," said John, "you see there are women, who live right here in Springdale, who are all the time busy, interested, and happy, with only such sources of enjoyment as are to be found here. Their time does not hang heavy on their hands; in fact, it is too short for all they wish to do."

"They are different from me," said Lillie.

"Then, since you must live here," said John, "could you not learn to be like them? could you not acquire some of these tastes that make simple country life agreeable?"

"No, I can't; I never could," said Lillie pettishly.

"Then," said John, "I don't see that anybody can help your being unhappy." And opening his book, he sat down, and began to read.

Lillie pouted awhile, and then drew from under the sofa-pillow a copy of "Indiana;" and establishing her feet on the fender, she began to read.

Lillie had acquired at school the doubtful talent of reading French with facility, and was soon deep in the fascinating pages, whose theme is the usual one of French novels, — a young wife, tired of domestic monotony, with an unappreciative husband, solacing herself with the devotion of a lover. Lillie felt a sort of pique with her husband. He was evidently unappreciative: he was thinking of all sorts of things more than of her, and growing stupid, as husbands in French romances generally do. She thought of her handsome Cousin Harry, the only man that she ever came anywhere near being in love with; and the image of his dark, handsome eyes and glossy curls gave a sort of piquancy to the story.

John got deeply interested in his book, and looking up from time to time, was relieved to find that Lillie had something to employ her.

"I may as well make a beginning," he said to himself. "I must have my time for reading; and she must learn to amuse herself."

After a while, however, he peeped over her shoulder.

"Why, darling!" he said, "where did you get that?"

"It is Mrs. Follingsbee's," said Lillie.

"Dear, it is a bad book," said John. "Don't read it."

"It amuses me, and helps pass away time," said Lillie; "and I don't think it is bad: it is beautiful. Besides, you read what amuses you; and it is a pity if I can't read what amuses me."

"I am glad to see you like to read French," continued John; "and I can get you some delightful French stories, which are not only pretty and witty, but have nothing in them that tends to pull down one's moral principles. Edmond About's 'Mariages de Paris' and 'Tolla' are charming French things; and, as he says, they might be read aloud by a man between his mother and his sister, without a shade of offense."

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Lillie. "You had better go to Rose Ferguson, and get her to give you a list of the kinds of books she prefers."

"Lillie!" said John severely, "your remarks about Rose are in bad taste. I must beg you to discontinue them. There are subjects that never ought to be jested about."

"Thank you, sir, for your moral lessons," said Lillie, turning her back on him defiantly, putting her feet on the fender, and going on with her reading.

John seated himself, and went on with his book in silence.

Now, this mode of passing a domestic evening is certainly not agreeable to either party; but we sustain the thesis that in this sort of interior warfare the woman has generally the best of it. When it comes to the science of annoyance, commend us to the lovely sex! Their methods

have a *finesse*, a suppleness, a universal adaptability, that does them infinite credit; and man, with all his strength, and all his majesty, and his commanding talent, is about as well off as a buffalo or a bison against a tiny, rainbow-winged gnat or mosquito, who bites, sings, and stings everywhere at once, with an infinite grace and facility.

A woman without magnanimity, without generosity, who has no love, and whom a man loves, is a terrible antagonist. To give up or to fight often seems equally impossible.

How is a man going to make a woman have a good time who is determined not to have it? Lillie had sense enough to see that, if she settled down into enjoyment of the little agreeablenesses and domesticities of the winter society in Springdale, she should lose her battle, and John would keep her there for life. The only way was to keep him as uncomfortable as possible without really breaking her power over him.

In the long run, in these encounters of will, the woman has every advantage. The constant dropping that wears away the stone has passed into a proverb.

Lillie meant to go to New York, and have a long campaign at the Follingsbees'. The thing had been all promised and arranged between them; and it was necessary that she should appear sufficiently miserable, and that John should be made sufficiently uncomfortable, to consent with effusion, at last, when her intentions were announced.

These purposes were not distinctly stated to herself; for as we have before intimated, uncultivated natures, who have never thought for a serious moment on self-education, or the way their character is forming, act purely from a sort of instinct, and do not even in their own minds fairly and squarely face their own motives and purposes; if they only did, their good angel would wear a less dejected look than he generally must.

Lillie had power enough, in that small circle, to stop and interrupt almost all its comfortable literary culture. The reading of Froude was given up. John could not go to the study club; and after an evening or two of trying to read up at home, he used to stay an hour later at his office. Lillie would go with him on Tuesday evening, after the readings were over; and then it was understood that all parties were to devote themselves to making the evening pass agreeable to her. She was to be put forward, kept in the foreground, and everything arranged to make her appear the queen of the fête. They had tableaux, where Rose made Lillie into marvelous pictures, which all admired and praised. They had little dances, which Lillie thought rather stupid and humdrum, because they were not *en grande toilette;* yet Lillie always made a great merit of putting up with her life at Springdale. A pleasant English writer has a lively paper on the advantages of being a "cantankerous fool," in which he goes to show that men or women of inferior moral parts, little self-control, and great selfishness, often acquire an absolute dominion over the circle in which they move, merely by the exercise of these traits. Every one being anxious to please and pacify them, and keep the peace with them, there is a constant succession of anxious compliances and compromises going on around them; by all of which they are benefited in getting their own will and way.

The one person who will not give up, and cannot be expected to be considerate or accommodating, comes at last to rule the whole circle. He is counted on like the fixed facts of nature; everybody else must turn out for him. So Lillie reigned in Springdale. In every little social gathering where she appeared, the one uneasy question was, would she have a good time, and anxious provision made to that end. Lillie had declared that reading aloud was a bore, which was definitive against reading-parties.

She liked to play and sing; so that was always a part of the programme. Lillie sang well, but needed a great deal of urging. Her throat was apt to be sore; and she took pains to say that the harsh winter weather in Springdale was ruining her voice. A good part of an evening was often spent in supplications before she could be induced to make the endeavor.

Lillie had taken up the whim of being jealous of Rose. Jealousy is said to be a sign of love. We hold another theory, and consider it more properly a sign of selfishness. Look at noble-hearted, unselfish women, and ask if they are easily made jealous. Look, again, at a woman who in her whole life shows no disposition to deny herself for her husband, or to enter into his tastes and views and feelings: are not such as she the most frequently jealous? Her husband, in her view, is a piece of her property; every look, word, and thought which he gives to any body or thing else is a part of her private possessions, unjustly withheld from her.

Independently of that, Lillie felt the instinctive jealousy which a *passée* queen of beauty sometimes has for a young rival. She had eyes to see that Rose was daily growing more and more beautiful; and not all that young girl's considerateness, her self-forgetfulness, her persistent endeavors to put Lillie forward, and make her the queen of the hour, could disguise this fact. Lillie was a keen-sighted little body, and saw, at a glance, that, once launched into society together, Rose would carry the day; all the more that no thought of any day to be carried was in her head.

Rose Ferguson had one source of attraction which is as great a natural gift as beauty, and which, when it is found with beauty, makes it perfectly irresistible; to wit, perfect unconsciousness of self. This is a wholly different trait from unselfishness: it is not a moral virtue, attained by

voluntary effort, but a constitutional gift, and a very great one. Fénelon praises it as a Christian grace, under the name of simplicity; but we incline to consider it only as an advantage of natural organization. There are many excellent Christians who are haunted by themselves, and in some form or other are always busy with themselves; either conscientiously pondering the right and wrong of their actions, or approbatively sensitive to the opinions of others, or æsthetically comparing their appearance and manners with an interior standard; while there are others who have received the gift, beyond the artist's eye or the musician's ear, of perfect self-forgetfulness. Their religion lacks the element of conflict, and comes to them by simple impulse.

> "Glad souls, without reproach or blot,
> Who do His will, and know it not."

Rose had a frank, open joyousness of nature, that shed around her a healthy charm, like fine, breezy weather, or a bright morning; making every one feel as if to be good were the most natural thing in the world. She seemed to be thinking always and directly of matters in hand, of things to be done, and subjects under discussion, as much as if she were an impersonal being.

She had been educated with every solid advantage which old Boston can give to her nicest girls; and that is saying a good deal. Returning to a country home at an early age, she had been made the companion of her father, entering into all his literary tastes, and receiving constantly, from association with him, that manly influence which a woman's mind needs to develop its completeness. Living the whole year in the country, the Fergusons developed within themselves a multiplicity of resources. They read and studied, and discussed subjects with their father; for, as we all know, the discussion of moral and social questions has been from the first, and always will be, a prime source

of amusement in New England families; and many of them keep up, with great spirit, a family debating society, in which whoever hath a psalm, a doctrine, or an interpretation, has free course.

Rose had never been in fashionable life, technically so called. She had not been brought out: there never had been a milestone set up to mark the place where "her education was finished;" and so she had gone on unconsciously, — studying, reading, drawing, and cultivating herself from year to year, with her head and hands always so full of pleasurable schemes and plans, that there really seemed to be no room for anything else. We have seen with what readiness she coöperated with Grace in the various good works of the factory village in which her father was interested, where her activity found abundant scope, and her beauty and grace of manner made her a sort of idol.

Rose had once or twice in her life been awakened to self-consciousness, by applicants rapping at the front door of her heart; but she answered with such a kind, frank, earnest, "No, I thank you, sir," as made friends of her lovers; and she entered at once into pleasant relations with them. Her nature was so healthy and free from all morbid suggestion, her yes and no so perfectly frank and positive, that there seemed no possibility of any tragedy caused by her.

Why did not John fall in love with Rose? Why did not he, O most sapient senate of womanhood? why did not your brother fall in love with that nice girl you know of, who grew up with you all at his very elbow, and was, as everybody else could see, just the proper person for him?

Well, why didn't he? There is the doctrine of election. "The election hath obtained it; and the rest were blinded." John was several years older than Rose. He had romped with her as a little girl, drawn her on his sled, picked up her hairpins, and worn her tippet, when they

had skated together as girl and boy. They had made each other Christmas and New Year's presents all their lives, and, to say the truth, loved each other honestly and truly: nevertheless, John fell in love with Lillie, and married her. Did you ever know a case like it?

CHAPTER XVIII

A BRICK TURNS UP

THE snow had been all night falling silently over the long elm avenues of Springdale. It was one of those soft, moist, dreamy snowfalls, which come down in great loose feathers, resting in magical frostwork on every tree, shrub, and plant, and seeming to bring down with it the purity and peace of upper worlds.

Grace's little cottage on Elm Street was embosomed, as New England cottages are apt to be, in a tangle of shrubbery, evergreens, syringas, and lilacs, which on such occasions become bowers of enchantment when the morning sun looks through them. Grace came into her parlor, which was cheery with the dazzling sunshine, and running to the window, began to examine anxiously the state of her various greeneries, pausing from time to time to look out admiringly at the wonderful snow landscape, with its many tremulous tints of rose, lilac, and amethyst. The only thing wanting was some one to speak to about it; and with a half sigh, she thought of the good old times when John would come to her chamber door in the morning, to get her out to look on scenes like this.

"Positively," she said to herself, "I must invite some one to visit me. One wants a friend to help one enjoy solitude." The stock of social life in Springdale, in fact, was running low. The Lennoxes and the Wilcoxes had gone to their Boston homes, and Rose Ferguson was visiting in New York, and Letitia found so much to do to supply her place to her father and mother, that she had less

time than usual to share with Grace. Then, again, the Elm Street cottage was a walk of some considerable distance; whereas, when Grace lived at the old homestead, the Fergusons were so near as to seem only one family, and were dropping in at all hours of the day and evening.

"Whom can I send for?" thought Grace to herself; and she ran over mentally, in a moment, the list of available friends and acquaintances. Reader, perhaps you have never really estimated your friends, till you have tried them by the question which of them you could ask to come and spend a week or fortnight with you, alone in a country house, in the depth of winter. Such an invitation supposes great faith in your friend, in yourself, or in human nature.

Grace, at the moment, was unable to think of anybody whom she could call from the approaching festivities of holiday life in the cities to share her snow Patmos with her; so she opened a book for company, and turned to where her dainty breakfast-table, with its hot coffee and crisp rolls, stood invitingly waiting for her before the cheerful open fire. At this moment, she saw, what she had not noticed before, a letter lying on her breakfast plate. Grace took it up with an exclamation of surprise, which, however, was heard only by her canary-birds and her plants.

Years before, when Grace was in the first summer of her womanhood, she had been very intimate with Walter Sydenham, and thoroughly esteemed and liked him; but as many another good girl has done, about those days she had conceived it her duty not to think of marriage, but to devote herself to making a home for her widowed father and her brother. There was a certain romance of self-abnegation in this disposition of herself which was rather pleasant to Grace, and in which both the gentlemen concerned found great advantage. As long as her father

lived, and John was unmarried and devoted to her, she had never regretted it.

Sydenham had gone to seek his fortune in California. He had begged to keep up intercourse by correspondence; but Grace was not one of those women who are willing to drain the heart of the man they refuse to marry, by keeping up with him just that degree of intimacy which prevents his seeking another. Grace had meant her refusal to be final, and had sincerely hoped that he would find happiness with some other woman; and to that intent had vigorously denied herself and him a correspondence: yet, from time to time, she had heard of him through an occasional letter to John, or by a chance Californian newspaper. Since John's marriage had so altered her course of life, Grace had thought of him more frequently, and with some questionings as to the wisdom of her course.

This letter was from him; and we shall give our readers the benefit of it: —

Dear Grace, — You must pardon me this beginning, — in the old style of other days; for though many years have passed, in which I have been trying to walk in your ways, and keep all your commandments, I have never yet been able to do as you directed, and forget you: and here I am, beginning "Dear Grace," — just where I left off on a certain evening long, long ago. I wonder if you remember it as plainly as I do. I am just the same fellow that I was then and there. If you remember, you admitted that, were it not for other duties, you might have considered my humble supplication. I gathered that it would not have been impossible *per se*, as metaphysicians say, to look with favor on your humble servant.

Gracie, I have been living, I trust, not unworthily of you. Your photograph has been with me round the world, — in the miner's tent, on shipboard, among scenes where

barbarous men do congregate; and everywhere it has been a presence, "to warn, to comfort, to command;" and if I have come out of many trials firmer, better, more established in right than before; if I am more believing in religion, and in every way grounded and settled in the way you would have me, — it has been your spiritual presence and your power over me that has done it. Besides that, I may as well tell you, I have never given up the hope that by and by you would see all this, and in some hour give me a different answer.

When, therefore, I learned of your father's death, and afterwards of John's marriage, I thought it was time for me to return again. I have come to New York, and if you do not forbid, shall come to Springdale.

Will you be a little glad to see me, Gracie? Why not? We are both alone now. Let us take hands, and walk the same path together. Shall we?

Yours till death, and after,

WALTER SYDENHAM.

Would she? To say the truth, the question as asked now had a very different air from the question as asked years before, when, full of life and hope and enthusiasm, she had devoted herself to making an ideal home for her father and brother. What other sympathy or communion, she had asked herself then, should she ever need than these friends, so very dear: and if she needed more, there, in the future, was John's ideal wife, who, somehow, always came before her in the likeness of Rose Ferguson, and John's ideal children, whom she was sure she should love and pet as if they were her own.

And now here she was, in a house all by herself, coming down to her meals, one after another, without the excitement of a cheerful face opposite to her, and with all possibility of confidential intercourse with her brother entirely

cut off. Lillie, in this matter, acted, with much grace and spirit, the part of the dog in the manger, and while she resolutely refused to enter into any of John's literary or intellectual tastes, seemed to consider her wifely rights infringed upon by any other woman who would. She would absolutely refuse to go up with her husband and spend an evening with Grace, alleging it was "poky and stupid," and that they always got talking about things that she did n't care anything about. If, then, John went without her to spend the evening, he was sure to be received, on his return, with a dead and gloomy silence, more fearful, sometimes, than the most violent of objurgations. That look of patient, heartbroken woe, those long-drawn sighs, were a reception that he dreaded, to say the truth, a great deal more than a direct attack or any fault-finding to which he could have replied; and so, on the whole, John made up his mind that the best thing he could do was to stay at home and rock the cradle of this fretful baby, whose wisdom-teeth were so hard to cut and so long in coming. It was a pretty baby, and when made the sole and undivided object of attention, when everything possible was done for it by everybody in the house, condescended often to be very graceful and winning and playful, and had numberless charming little ways and tricks.

The difference between Lillie in good humor and Lillie in bad humor was a thing which John soon learned to appreciate as one of the most powerful forces in his life. If you knew, my dear reader, that by pursuing a certain course you could bring upon yourself a drizzling, dreary, northeast rainstorm, and by taking heed to your ways you could secure sunshine, flowers, and bird-singing, you would be very careful, after a while, to keep about you the right atmospheric temperature; and if going to see the very best friend you had on earth was sure to bring on a fit of

rheumatism or toothache, you would soon learn to be very sparing of your visits. For this reason it was that Grace saw very little of John; that she never now had a sisterly conversation with him; that she preferred arranging all those little business matters, in which it would be convenient to have a masculine appeal, solely and singly by herself. The thing was never referred to in any conversation between them. It was perfectly understood without words. There are friends between whom and us has shut the coffin-lid; and there are others between whom and us stand sacred duties, considerations never to be enough reverenced, which forbid us to seek their society, or to ask to lean on them either in joy or sorrow: the whole thing as regards them must be postponed until the future life. Such had been Grace's conclusion with regard to her brother. She well knew that any attempt to restore their former intimacy would only diminish and destroy what little chance of happiness yet remained to him; and it may therefore be imagined with what changed eyes she read Walter Sydenham's letter from those of years ago.

There was a sound of stamping feet at the front door; and John came in, all ruddy and snow-powdered, but looking, on the whole, uncommonly cheerful.

"Well, Gracie," he said, "the fact is, I shall have to let Lillie go to New York for a week or two, to see those Follingsbees. Hang them! But what 's the matter, Gracie? Have you been crying, or sitting up all night reading, or what?"

The fact was, that Grace had for once been indulging in a good cry, rather pitying herself for her loneliness, now that the offer of relief had come. She laughed, though, and handing John her letter, said, "Look here, John! here 's a letter I have just had from Walter Sydenham."

John broke out into a loud, hilarious laugh. "The blessed old brick!" said he. "Has he turned up again?"

"Read the letter, John," said Grace. "I don't know exactly how to answer it."

John read the letter, and seemed to grow more and more quiet as he read it. Then he came and stood by Grace, and stroked her hair gently. "I wish, Gracie dear," he said, "you had asked my advice about this matter years ago. You loved Walter, — I can see you did; and you sent him off on my account. It is just too bad! Of all the men I ever knew, he was the one I should have been best pleased to have you marry!"

"It was not wholly on your account, John. You know there was our father," said Grace.

"Yes, yes, Gracie; but he would have preferred to see you well married. He would not have been so selfish, nor I either. It is your self-abnegation, you dear over-good women, that makes us men seem selfish. We should be as good as you are, if you would give us the chance. I think, Gracie, though you 're not aware of it, there is a spice of pharisaism in the way in which you good girls allow us men to swallow you up without ever telling us what you are doing. I often wondered about your intimacy with Sydenham, and why it never came to anything; and I can but half forgive you. How selfish I must have seemed!"

"Oh no, John! indeed not."

"Come, you need n't put on these meek airs. I insist upon it, you have been feeling self-righteous and abused," said John, laughing; "but 'all 's well that ends well.' Sit down, now, and write him a real sensible letter, like a nice honest woman as you are."

"And say, 'Yes, sir, and thank you too'?" said Grace, laughing.

"Well, something in that way," said John. "You can fence it in with as many make-believes as is proper. And now, Gracie, this is deuced lucky! You see, Sydenham

will be down here at once; and it would n't be exactly the thing for you to receive him at this house, and our only hotel is perfectly impracticable in winter; and that brings me to what I am here about. Lillie is going to New York to spend the holidays; and I wanted you to shut up, and come up and keep house for us. You see, you have only one servant, and we have four to be looked after. You can bring your maid along, and then I will invite Walter to our house, where he will have a clear field; and you can settle all your matters between you."

"So Lillie is going to the Follingsbees'?" said Grace.

"Yes: she had a long, desperately sentimental letter from Mrs. Follingsbee, urging, imploring, and entreating, and setting forth all the splendors and glories of New York. Between you and me, it strikes me that that Mrs. Follingsbee is an affected goose; but I could n't say so to Lillie, 'by no manner of means.' She professes an untold amount of admiration and friendship for Lillie, and sets such brilliant prospects before her, that I should be the most hard-hearted old Turk in existence if I were to raise any objections; and, in fact, Lillie is quite brilliant in anticipation, and makes herself so delightful that I am almost sorry that I agreed to let her go."

"When shall you want me, John?"

"Well, this evening, say; and, by the way, could n't you come up and see Lillie a little while this morning? She sent her love to you, and said she was so hurried with packing, and all that, that she wanted you to excuse her not calling."

"Oh yes! I 'll come," said Grace good-naturedly, "as soon as I have had time to put things in a little order."

"And write your letter," said John gayly, as he went out. "Don't forget that."

Grace did not forget the letter; but we shall not indulge our readers with any peep over her shoulder, only saying

that, though written with an abundance of precaution, it was one with which Walter Sydenham was well satisfied.

Then she made her few arrangements in the housekeeping line, called in her grand vizier and prime minister from the kitchen, and held with her a council of ways and means; put on her India rubbers and Polish boots, and walked up through the deep snow-drifts to the Springdale post-office, where she dropped the fateful letter with a good heart on the whole; and then she went on to John's, the old home, to offer any parting services to Lillie that might be wanted.

It is rather amusing, in any family circle, to see how some one member, by dint of persistent exactions, comes to receive always, in all the exigencies of life, an amount of attention and devotion which is never rendered back. Lillie never thought of such a thing as offering any services of any sort to Grace. Grace might have packed her trunks to go to the moon, or the Pacific Ocean, quite alone for matter of any help Lillie would ever have thought of. If Grace had headache or toothache or a bad cold, Lillie was always "so sorry;" but it never occurred to her to go and sit with her, to read to her, or offer any of a hundred little sisterly offices. When she was in similar case, John always summoned Grace to sit with Lillie during the hours that his business necessarily took him from her. It really seemed to be John's impression that a toothache or headache of Lillie's was something entirely different from the same thing with Grace, or any other person in the world; and Lillie fully shared the impression.

Grace found the little empress quite bewildered in her multiplicity of preparations and neglected details, all of which had been deferred to the last day; and Rosa and Anne and Bridget, in fact the whole staff, were all busy in getting her off.

"So good of you to come, Gracie!" and, "If you would

do this;" and, "Won't you see to that?" and, "If you could just do the other!" and Grace both could and would, and did what no other pair of hands could in the same time. John apologized for the lack of any dinner. "The fact is, Gracie, Bridget had to be getting up a lot of her things that were forgotten till the last moment; and I told her not to mind, we could do on a cold lunch." Bridget herself had become so wholly accustomed to the ways of her little mistress, that it now seemed the most natural thing in the world that the whole house should be upset for her. But at last everything was ready and packed, the trunks and boxes shut and locked, and the keys sorted; and John and Lillie were on their way to the station.

"I shall find out Walter in New York, and bring him back with me," said John cheerily, as he parted from Grace in the hall. "I leave you to get things all to rights for us."

It would not have been a very agreeable or cheerful piece of work to tidy the disordered house and take command of the domestic forces under any other circumstances; but now Grace found it a very nice diversion to prevent her thoughts from running too curiously on this future meeting. "After all," she thought to herself, "he is just the same venturesome, imprudent creature that he always was, jumping at conclusions, and insisting on seeing everything in his own way. How could he dare write me such a letter without seeing me? Ten years make great changes. How could he be sure he would like me?" And she examined herself somewhat critically in the looking-glass.

"Well," she said, "he may thank me for it that we are not engaged, and that he comes only as an old friend, and perfectly free, for all he has said, to be nothing more, unless on seeing each other we are so agreed. I am so sorry the old place is all demolished and be-Frenchified.

It won't look natural to him; and I am not the kind of person to harmonize with these cold, polished, glistening, slippery surroundings, that have no home life or association in them."

But Grace had to wake from these reflections to culinary councils with Bridget, and to arrangements of apartments with Rosa. Her own exacting carefulness followed the careless footsteps of the untrained handmaids, and rearranged every plait and fold; so that by nightfall the next day she was thoroughly tired.

She beguiled the last moments, while waiting for the coming of the cars, in arranging her hair, and putting on one of those wonderful Parisian dresses which adapt themselves so precisely to the air of the wearer that they seem to be in themselves works of art. Then she stood with a fluttering color to see the carriage drive up to the door, and the two get out of it.

It is almost too bad to spy out such meetings, and certainly one has no business to describe them; but Walter Sydenham carried all before him, by an old habit which he had of taking all and everything for granted, as, from the first moment, he did with Grace. He had no idea of hesitations or holdings off, and would have none; and met Grace as if they had parted only yesterday, and as if her word to him always had been yes instead of no.

In fact, they had not been together five minutes before the whole life of youth returned to them both, — that indestructible youth which belongs to warm hearts and buoyant spirits. Such a merry evening as they had of it! When John, as the wood fire burned low on the hearth, with some excuse of letters to write in his library, left them alone together, Walter put on Grace's finger a diamond ring, saying: —

"There, Gracie! now, when shall it be? You see, you've kept me waiting so long that I can't spare you

much time. I have an engagement to be in Montreal the first of February, and I couldn't think of going alone. They have merry times there in midwinter; and I'm sure it will be ever so much nicer for you than keeping house alone here."

Grace said, of course, that it was impossible; but Walter declared that doing the impossible was precisely in his line, and pushed on his various advantages with such spirit and energy that, when they parted for the night, Grace said she would think of it: which promise, at the breakfast-table next morning, was interpreted by the unblushing Walter, and reported to John, as a full consent. Before noon that day Walter had walked up with John and Grace to take a survey of the cottage, and had given John indefinite power to engage workmen and artificers to rearrange and enlarge and beautify it for their return after the wedding journey. For the rest of the visit, all the three were busy with pencil and paper, projecting balconies, bow windows, pantries, library, and dining-room, till the old cottage so blossomed out in imagination as to leave only a germ of its former self.

Walter's visit brought back to John a deal of the warmth and freedom which he had not known since he married. We often live under an insensible pressure of which we are made aware only by its removal. John had been so much in the habit lately of watching to please Lillie, of measuring and checking his words or actions, that he now bubbled over with a wild, free delight in finding himself alone with Grace and Walter. He laughed, sang, whistled, skipped upstairs two at a time, and scarcely dared to say even to himself why he was so happy. He did not face himself with that question, and went dutifully to the library at stated times to write to Lillie, and made much of her little letters.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE

If John managed to be happy without Lillie in Springdale, Lillie managed to be blissful without him in New York. "The bird let loose in Eastern skies" never hastened more fondly home than she to its glitter and gayety, its life and motion, dash and sensation. She rustled in all her bravery of curls and frills, pinkings and quillings, — a marvelous specimen of Parisian frostwork, without one breath of reason or philosophy or conscience to melt it.

The Follingsbees' house might stand for the original of the Castle of Indolence: —

> "Halls where who can tell
> What elegance and grandeur wide expand, —
> The pride of Turkey and of Persia's land?
> Soft quilts on quilts; on carpets, carpets spread;
> And couches stretched around in seemly band;
> And endless pillows rise to prop the head:
> So that each spacious room was one full swelling bed."

It was not without some considerable profit that Mrs. Follingsbee had read Balzac and Dumas, and had Charlie Ferrola for master of arts in her establishment. The effect of the whole was perfect; it transported one, bodily, back to the times of Montespan and Pompadour, when life was all one glittering upper crust, and pretty women were never troubled with even the shadow of a duty.

It was with a rebound of joyousness that Lillie found herself once more with a crowded list of invitations, calls, operas, dancing, and shopping, that kept her pretty little

head in a perfect whirl of excitement, and gave her not one moment for thought. Mrs. Follingsbee, to say the truth, would have been a little careful about inviting a rival queen of beauty into the circle, were it not that Charlie Ferrola, after an attentive consideration of the subject, had assured her that a golden-haired blonde would form a most complete and effective tableau, in contrast with her own dark rich style of beauty. Neither would lose by it, so he said; and the impression, as they rode together in an elegant open barouche, with ermine carriage robes, would be "stunning." So they called each other *ma sœur*, and drove out in the Park in a ravishing little pony-phaeton all foamed over with ermine, drawn by a lovely pair of cream-colored horses, whose harness glittered with gold and silver, after the fashion of the Count of Monte Cristo. In truth, if Dick Follingsbee did not remind one of Solomon in all particulars, he was like him in one, that he "made silver and gold as the stones of the street" in New York.

Lillie's presence, however, was all desirable; because it would draw the calls of two or three old New York families who had hitherto stood upon their dignity, and refused to acknowledge the shoddy aristocracy. The beautiful Mrs. John Seymour, therefore, was no less useful than ornamental, and advanced Mrs. Follingsbee's purposes in her "Excelsior" movements.

"Now, I suppose," said Mrs. Follingsbee to Lillie one day, when they had been out making fashionable calls together, "we really must call on Charlie's wife, just to keep her quiet."

"I thought you did n't like her," said Lillie.

"I don't; I think she is dreadfully common," said Mrs. Follingsbee: "she is one of those women who can't talk anything but baby, and bores Charlie half to death. But then, you know, when there is a *liaison* like mine with

Charlie, one can't be too careful to cultivate the wives. *Les convenances*, you know, are the all-important things. I send her presents constantly, and send my carriage around to take her to church or opera, or anything that is going on, and have her children at my fancy parties: yet, for all that, the creature has not a particle of gratitude; those narrow-minded women never have. You know I am very susceptible to people's atmospheres; and I always feel that that creature is just as full of spite and jealousy as she can stick in her skin."

It will be remarked that this was one of those idiomatic phrases which got lodged in Mrs. Follingsbee's head in a less cultivated period of her life, as a rusty needle sometimes hides in a cushion, coming out unexpectedly when excitement gives it an honest squeeze.

"Now, I should think," pursued Mrs. Follingsbee, "that a woman who really loved her husband would be thankful to have him have such a rest from the disturbing family cares which smother a man's genius, as a house like ours offers him. How can the artistic nature exercise itself in the very grind of the thing, when this child has a cold, and the other the croup, and there is fussing with mustard-paste and ipecac and paregoric, — all those realities, you know? Why, Charlie tells me he feels a great deal more affection for his children when he is all calm and tranquil in the little boudoir at our house; and he writes such lovely little poems about them, I must show you some of them. But this creature does n't appreciate them a bit: she has no poetry in her."

"Well, I must say, I don't think I should have," said Lillie honestly. "I should be just as mad as I could be if John acted so."

"Oh, my dear! the cases are different: Charlie has such peculiarities of genius. The artistic nature, you know, requires soothing." Here they stopped, and rang at the

door of a neat little house, and were ushered into a pair of those characteristic parlors which show that they have been arranged by a home-worshiper and a mother. There were plants and birds and flowers, and little *genre* pictures of children, animals, and household interiors, arranged with a loving eye and hand.

"Did you ever see anything so perfectly characteristic?" said Mrs. Follingsbee, looking around her as if she were going to faint. "This woman drives Charlie perfectly wild, because she has no appreciation of high art. Now, I sent her photographs of Michael Angelo's 'Moses,' and 'Night and Morning;' and I really wish you would see where she hung them, — away in yonder dark corner!"

"I think myself they are enough to scare the owls," said Lillie, after a moment's contemplation.

"But, my dear, you know they are the thing," said Mrs. Follingsbee: "people never like such things at first, and one must get used to high art before one forms a taste for it. The thing with her is, she has no docility. She does not try to enter into Charlie's tastes."

The woman with "no docility" entered at this moment, — a little snowdrop of a creature, with a pale, pure, Madonna face, and that sad air of hopeless firmness which is seen unhappily in the faces of so many women.

"I had to bring baby down," she said. "I have no nurse to-day, and he has been threatened with croup."

"The dear little fellow!" said Mrs. Follingsbee, with officious graciousness. "So glad you brought him down; come to his aunty?" she inquired lovingly, as the little fellow shrank away, and regarded her with round, astonished eyes. "Why will you not come to my next reception, Mrs. Ferrola?" she added. "You make yourself quite a stranger to us. You ought to give yourself some variety."

"The fact is, Mrs. Follingsbee," said Mrs. Ferrola,

"receptions in New York generally begin about my bed-time; and if I should spend the night out, I should have no strength to give to my children the next day."

"But, my dear, you ought to have some amusement."

"My children amuse me, if you will believe it," said Mrs. Ferrola, with a remarkably quiet smile.

Mrs. Follingsbee was not quite sure whether this was meant to be sarcastic or not. She answered, however, "Well! your husband will come, at all events."

"You may be quite sure of that," said Mrs. Ferrola, with the same quietness.

"Well!" said Mrs. Follingsbee, rising with patronizing cheerfulness, "delighted to see you doing so well; and if it is pleasant, I will send the carriage round to take you for a drive in the Park this afternoon. Good-morning."

And like a rustling cloud of silks and satins and perfumes, she bent down and kissed the baby, and swept from the apartment. Mrs. Ferrola, with a movement that seemed involuntary, wiped the baby's cheek with her handkerchief, and folding it closer to her bosom, looked up as if asking patience where patience is to be found for the asking.

"There! didn't I tell you?" said Mrs. Follingsbee when she came out; "just one of those provoking, meek, obstinate, impracticable creatures, with no adaptation in her."

"Oh, gracious me!" said Lillie: "I can't imagine more dire despair than to sit all day tending baby."

"Well, so you would think; and Charlie has offered to hire competent nurses, and wants her to dress herself up and go into society; and she just won't do it, and sticks right down by the cradle there, with her children running over her like so many squirrels."

"Oh! I hope and trust I never shall have children," said Lillie fervently, "because, you see, there 's an end of everything. No more fun, no more frolics, no more admi-

ration or good times; nothing but this frightful baby, that you can't get rid of."

Yet, as Lillie spoke, she knew, in her own slippery little heart, that the shadow of this awful cloud of maternity was resting over her; though she laced and danced, and bid defiance to every law of nature, with a blind and ignorant willfulness, not caring what consequences she might draw down on herself if only she might escape this.

And was there, then, no soft spot in this woman's heart anywhere? Generally it is thought that the throb of the child's heart awakens a heart in the mother, and that the mother is born again with her child. It is so with unperverted nature, as God meant it to be; and you shall hear from the lips of an Irish washerwoman a genuine poetry of maternal feeling for the little one who comes to make her toil more toilsome that is wholly withered away out of luxurious circles, where there is everything to make life easy. Just as the Chinese have contrived fashionable monsters, where human beings are constrained to grow in the shape of flower-pots, so fashionable life contrives at last to grow a woman who hates babies, and will risk her life to be rid of the crowning glory of womanhood.

There was a time in Lillie's life, when she was sixteen years of age, which was a turning-point with her, and decided that she should be the heartless woman she was. If at that age, and at that time, she had decided to marry the man she really loved, marriage might indeed have proved to her a sacrament. It might have opened to her a door through which she could have passed out from a career of selfish worldliness into that gradual discipline of unselfishness which a true love-marriage brings.

But she did not. The man was poor, and she was beautiful; her beauty would buy wealth and worldly position, and so she cast him off. Yet partly to gratify her own lingering feeling, and partly because she could not wholly

renounce what had once been hers, she kept up for years with him just that illusive simulacrum which such women call friendship; which, while constantly denying, constantly takes pains to attract, and drains the heart of all possibility of loving another.

Harry Endicott was a young man of fine capabilities, sensitive, interesting, handsome, full of generous impulses, whom a good woman might easily have led to a full completeness. He was not really Lillie's cousin, but the cousin of her mother; yet under the name of cousin he had constant access and family intimacy.

This winter Harry Endicott suddenly returned to the fashionable circles of New York, — returned from a successful career in India, with an ample fortune. He was handsomer than ever, took stylish bachelor lodgings, set up a most distracting turnout, and became a sort of Marquis of Farintosh in fashionable circles. Was ever anything so lucky, or so unlucky, for our Lillie? — lucky, if life really does run on the basis of French novels, and if all that is needed is the sparkle and stimulus of new emotions; unlucky, nay, even gravely terrible, if life really is established on a basis of moral responsibility, and dogged by the fatal necessity that "whatsoever man or woman soweth, that shall he or she also reap."

In the most critical hour of her youth, when love was sent to her heart like an angel, to beguile her from selfishness, and make self-denial easy, Lillie's pretty little right hand had sowed to the world and the flesh; and of that sowing she was now to reap all the disquiets, the vexations, the tremors, that go to fill the pages of French novels, — records of women who marry where they cannot love, to serve the purposes of selfishness and ambition, and then make up for it by loving where they cannot marry. If all the women in America who have practiced, and are practicing, this species of moral agriculture should stand forth

together, it would be seen that it is not for nothing that France has been called the society educator of the world.

The apartments of the Follingsbee mansion, with their dreamy voluptuousness, were eminently adapted to be the background and scenery of a dramatic performance of this kind. There were vistas of drawing-rooms, with delicious boudoirs, like side chapels in a temple of Venus, with handsome Charlie Ferrola gliding in and out, or lecturing dreamily from the corner of some sofa on the last most important crinkle of the artistic rose leaf, demonstrating conclusively that beauty was the only true morality, and that there was no sin but bad taste; and that nobody knew what good taste was but himself and his clique. There was the discussion, far from edifying, of modern improved theories of society, seen from an improved philosophic point of view; of all the peculiar wants and needs of etherealized beings, who have been refined and cultivated till it is the most difficult problem in the world to keep them comfortable, while there still remains the most imperative necessity that they should be made happy, though the whole universe were to be torn down and made over to effect it.

The idea of not being happy, and in all respects as blissful as they could possibly be made, was one always assumed by the Follingsbee clique as an injustice to be wrestled with. Anybody that did not affect them agreeably, that jarred on their nerves, or interrupted the delicious reveries of existence with the sharp saw-setting of commonplace realities, in their view ought to be got rid of summarily, whether that somebody were husband or wife, parent or child. Natures that affected each other pleasantly were to spring together like dewdrops, and sail off on rosy clouds with each other to the land of Do-just-as-you-have-a-mind-to. The only thing never to be enough regretted, which prevented this immediate and blissful union of particles,

was the impossibility of living on rosy clouds, and making them the means of conveyance to the desirable country before mentioned. Many of the fair *illuminatæ*, who were quite willing to go off with a kindred spirit, were withheld by the necessities of infinite pairs of French kid gloves, and gallons of cologne water, and indispensable clouds of mechlin and point lace, which were necessary to keep around them the poetry of existence.

Although it was well understood among them that the religion of the emotions is the only true religion, and that nothing is holy that you do not feel exactly like doing, and everything is holy that you do; still, these fair confessors lacked the pluck of primitive Christians, and could not think of taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, even for the sake of a kindred spirit. Hence the necessity of living in deplored marriage bonds with husbands who could pay rent and taxes, and stand responsible for unlimited bills at Stewart's and Tiffany's. Hence the philosophy which allowed the possession of the body to one man and of the soul to another, which one may see treated of at large in any writings of the day.

As yet Lillie had been kept intact from all this sort of thing by the hard, brilliant enamel of selfishness. That little shrewd, gritty common sense, which enabled her to see directly through other people's illusions, has, if we mistake not, by this time revealed itself to our readers as an element in her mind: but now there is to come a decided thrust at the heart of her womanhood; and we shall see whether the paralysis is complete, or whether the woman is alive.

If Lillie had loved Harry Endicott poor, had loved him so much that at one time she had seriously balanced the possibility of going to housekeeping in a little unfashionable house, and having only one girl, and hand in hand with him walking the paths of economy, self-denial, and

prudence, — the reader will see that Harry Endicott rich, Harry Endicott enthroned in fashionable success, Harry Endicott plus fast horses, splendid equipages, a fine city house, and a country house on the Hudson, was something still more dangerous to her imagination.

But more than this was the stimulus of Harry Endicott out of her power, and beyond the sphere of her charms. She had a feverish desire to see him, but he never called. Forthwith she had a confidential conversation with her bosom friend, who entered into the situation with enthusiasm, and invited him to her receptions. But he did not come.

The fact was, that Harry Endicott hated Lillie now, with that kind of hatred which is love turned wrong side out. He hated her for the misery she had caused him, and was in some danger of feeling it incumbent on himself to go to the devil in a wholly unnecessary manner on that account. He had read the story of "Monte Cristo," with its highly wrought plot of vengeance, and had determined to avenge himself on the woman who had so tortured him, and to make her feel, if possible, what he had felt. So when he had discovered the hours of driving observed by Mrs. Follingsbee and Lillie in the Park, he took pains, from time to time, to meet them face to face, and to pass Lillie with an unrecognizing stare. Then he dashed in among Mrs. Follingsbee's circle, making himself everywhere talked of, till they were beset on all hands by the inquiry, "Don't you know young Endicott? why, I should think you would want to have him visit here."

After this had been played far enough, he suddenly showed himself one evening at Mrs. Follingsbee's, and apologized in an off-hand manner to Lillie, when reminded of passing her in the Park, that really he was n't thinking of meeting her, and did n't recognize her, she was so altered; it had been so many years since they had met, etc. All in a tone of cool and heartless civility, every

word of which was a dagger's thrust, not only into her vanity, but into the poor little bit of a real heart which fashionable life had left to Lillie.

Every evening, after he had gone, came a long, confidential conversation with Mrs. Follingsbee, in which every word and look was discussed and turned, and all possible or probable inferences therefrom reported; after which Lillie often laid a sleepless head on a hot and tumbled pillow, poor, miserable child! suffering her punishment, without even the grace to know whence it came, or what it meant. Hitherto Lillie had been walking only in the limits of that kind of permitted wickedness which, although certainly the remotest thing possible from the Christianity of Christ, finds a great deal of tolerance and patronage among communicants of the altar. She had lived a gay, vain, self-pleasing life, with no object or purpose but the simple one to get each day as much pleasurable enjoyment out of existence as possible. Mental and physical indolence and inordinate vanity had been the keynotes of her life. She hated everything that required protracted thought, or that made trouble, and she longed for excitement. The passion for praise and admiration had become to her like the passion of the opium-eater for his drug, or of the brandy-drinker for his dram. But now she was heedlessly steering to what might prove a more palpable sin.

Harry the serf, once half despised for his slavish devotion, now stood before her, proud and free, and tantalized her by the display he made of his indifference, and preference for others. She put forth every art and effort to recapture him. But the most dreadful stroke of fate of all was, that Rose Ferguson had come to New York to make a winter visit, and was much talked of in certain circles where Harry was quite intimate; and he professed himself, indeed, an ardent admirer at her shrine.

CHAPTER XX

THE VAN ASTRACHANS

THE Van Astrachans, a proud, rich old family, who took a certain defined position in New York life on account of some ancestral passages in their family history, had invited Rose to spend a month or two with them; and she was therefore moving as a star in a very high orbit. Now these Van Astrachans were one of those cold, glittering, inaccessible pinnacles in Mrs. Follingsbee's fashionable Alp-climbing which she would spare no expense to reach if possible. It was one of the families for whose sake she had Mrs. John Seymour under her roof; and the advent of Rose, whom she was pleased to style one of Mrs. Seymour's most intimate friends, was an unhoped-for stroke of good luck; because there was the necessity of calling on Rose, of taking her out to drive in the Park, and of making a party on her account, from which, of course, the Van Astrachans could not stay away.

It will be seen here that our friend, Mrs. Follingsbee, like all ladies whose watchword is "Excelsior," had a peculiar, difficult, and slippery path to climb.

The Van Astrachans were good old Dutch Reformed Christians, unquestioning believers in the Bible in general, and the Ten Commandments in particular, — persons whose moral constitutions had been nourished on the great stocky beefsteaks and sirloins of plain old truths which go to form English and Dutch nature. Theirs was a style of character which rendered them utterly hopeless of comprehending the etherealized species of holiness which obtained in the in-

nermost circles of the Follingsbee *illuminati.* Mr. Van Astrachan buttoned under his coat, not only many solid inches of what Carlyle calls "good Christian fat," but also a pocketbook through which millions of dollars were passing daily in an easy and comfortable flow, to the great advantage of many of his fellow creatures no less than himself; and somehow or other he was pig-headed in the idea that the Bible and the Ten Commandments had something to do with that stability of things which made this necessary flow easy and secure. He was slow-moulded, accurate, and fond of security; and was of opinion that nineteen centuries of Christianity ought to have settled a few questions so that they could be taken for granted, and were not to be kept open for discussion.

Moreover, Mr. Van Astrachan having read the accounts of the first French Revolution, and having remarked all the subsequent history of that country, was confirmed in his idea, that pitching everything into pi once in fifty years was no way to get on in the affairs of this world. He had strong suspicions of everything French, and a mind very ill adapted to all those delicate reasonings and shadings and speculations of which Mr. Charlie Ferrola was particularly fond, which made everything in morals and religion an open question.

He and his portly wife planted themselves, like two canons of the sanctuary, every Sunday, in the tip-top highest-priced pew of the most orthodox old church in New York; and if the worthy man sometimes indulged in gentle slumbers in the high-padded walls of his slip, it was because he was so well assured of the orthodoxy of his minister that he felt that no interest of society would suffer while he was off duty. But may Heaven grant us, in these days of dissolving views and general undulation, large armies of these solid-planted artillery on the walls of our Zion!

Blessed be the people whose strength is to sit still! Much needed are they when the activity of free inquiry seems likely to chase us out of house and home, and leave us, like the dove in the Deluge, no rest for the sole of our foot. Let us thank God for those Dutch Reformed churches; great solid breakwaters, that stand as the dikes in their ancestral Holland to keep out the muddy waves of that sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

But let us fancy with what quakings and shakings of heart Mrs. Follingsbee must have sought the alliance of these tremendously solid old Christians. They were precisely what she wanted to give an air of solidity to the cobweb glitter of her state. And we can also see how necessary it was that she should ostentatiously visit Charlie Ferrola's wife, and speak of her as a darling creature, her particular friend, whom she was doing her very best to keep out of an early grave.

Charlie Ferrola said that the Van Astrachans were obtuse; and so, to a certain degree, they were. In social matters they had a kind of confiding simplicity. They were so much accustomed to regard positive morals in the light of immutable laws of nature, that it would not have been easy to have made them understand that sliding scale of estimates which is in use nowadays. They would probably have had but one word, and that a very disagreeable one, to designate a married woman who was in love with anybody but her husband. Consequently, they were the very last people whom any gossip of this sort could ever reach, or to whose ears it could have been made intelligible.

Mr. Van Astrachan considered Dick Follingsbee a swindler, whose proper place was the state's prison, and whose morals could only be mentioned with those of Sodom and Gomorrah. Nevertheless, as Mrs. Follingsbee made it a point of rolling up her eyes and sighing deeply when his

name was mentioned, — as she attended church on Sunday with conspicuous faithfulness, and subscribed to charitable societies and all manner of good works, — as she had got appointed directress on the board of an orphan asylum where Mrs. Van Astrachan figured in association with her, that good lady was led to look upon her with compassion, as a worthy woman who was making the best of her way to heaven, notwithstanding the opposition of a dissolute husband.

As for Rose, she was as fresh and innocent and dewy, in the hot whirl and glitter and glare of New York, as a waving spray of sweetbrier, brought in fresh with all the dew upon it. She really had for Lillie a great deal of that kind of artistic admiration which nice young girls sometimes have for very beautiful women older than themselves, and was, like almost every one else, somewhat bejuggled and taken in by that air of infantine sweetness and simplicity which had survived all the hot glitter of her life, as if a rose, fresh with dew, should lie unwilted in the mouth of a furnace.

Moreover, Lillie's face had a beauty this winter it had never worn: the softness of a real feeling, the pathos of real suffering, at times touched her face with something that was always wanting in it before. The bitter waters of sin that she would drink gave a strange feverish color to her cheek; and the poisoned perfume she would inhale gave a strange new brightness to her eyes.

Rose sometimes looked on her and wondered; so innocent and healthy and light hearted in herself, she could not even dream of what was passing. She had been brought up to love John as a brother, and opened her heart at once to his wife with a sweet and loyal faithfulness. When she told Mrs. Van Astrachan that Mrs. John Seymour was one of her friends from Springdale, married into a family with which she had grown up with great

intimacy, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to the good lady that Rose should want to visit her; that she should drive with her, and call on her, and receive her at their house; and with her of course must come Mrs. Follingsbee.

Mr. Van Astrachan made a dead halt at the idea of Dick Follingsbee. He never would receive that man under his roof, he said, and he never would enter his house; and when Mr. Van Astrachan once said a thing of this kind, as Mr. Hosea Biglow remarks, "a meeting-house was n't sotter."

But then Mrs. Follingsbee's situation was confidentially stated to Lillie, and by Lillie confidentially stated to Rose, and by Rose to Mrs. Van Astrachan; and it was made to appear how Dick Follingsbee had entirely abandoned his wife, going off in the ways of Balaam the son of Bosor, and all other bad ways mentioned in Scripture, habitually leaving poor Mrs. Follingsbee to entertain company alone, so that he was never seen at her parties, and had nothing to do with her.

"So much the better for them," remarked Mr. Van Astrachan.

"In that case, my dear, I don't see that it would do any harm for you to go to Mrs. Follingsbee's party on Rose's account. I never go to parties, as you know; and I certainly should not begin by going there. But still I see no objection to your taking Rose."

If Mr. Van Astrachan had seen objections, you never would have caught Mrs. Van Astrachan going; for she was one of your full-blooded women, who never in her life engaged to do a thing she did n't mean to do: and having promised in the marriage service to obey her husband, she obeyed him plumb, with the air of a person who is fulfilling the prophecies; though her chances in this way were very small, as Mr. Van Astrachan generally called her

"ma," and obeyed all her orders with a stolid precision quite edifying to behold. He took her advice always, and was often heard naïvely to remark that Mrs. Van Astrachan and he were always of the same opinion, — an expression happily defining that state in which a man does just what his wife tells him to.

CHAPTER XXI

MRS. FOLLINGSBEE'S PARTY, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

Our vulgar idea of a party is a week or fortnight of previous discomfort and chaotic tergiversation, and the mistress of it all distracted and worn out with endless cares. Such a party bursts in on a well-ordered family state as a bomb bursts into a city, leaving confusion and disorder all around. But it would be a pity if such a life-long devotion to the arts and graces as Mrs. Follingsbee had given, backed by Dick Follingsbee's fabulous fortune, and administered by the exquisite Charlie Ferrola, should not have brought forth some appreciable results. One was, that the great Castle of Indolence was prepared for the fête with no more ripple of disturbance than if it had been a Nereid's bower, far down beneath the reach of tempests, where the golden sand is never ruffled, and the crimson and blue sea-flowers never even dream of commotion.

Charlie Ferrola wore, it is true, a brow somewhat oppressed with care, and was kept tucked up on a rose-colored satin sofa, and served with lachrymæ Christi, and Montefiascone, and all other substitutes for the dews of Hybla, while he draughted designs for the floral arrangements, which were executed by obsequious attendants in felt slippers; and the whole process of arrangement proceeded like a dream of the lotus-eaters' paradise.

Madame de Tullegig was of course retained primarily for the adornment of Mrs. Follingsbee's person. It was understood, however, on this occasion, that the composition

of the costumes was to embrace both hers and Lillie's, that they might appear in a contrasted tableau, and bring out each other's points. It was a subject worthy a Parisian artiste, and drew so seriously on Madame de Tulle-gig's brain power, that she assured Mrs. Follingsbee afterwards that the effort of composition had sensibly exhausted her.

Before we relate the events of that evening, as they occurred, we must give some little idea of the position in which the respective parties now stood.

Harry Endicott, by his mother's side, was related to Mrs. Van Astrachan. Mr. Van Astrachan had been, in a certain way, guardian to him; and his success in making his fortune was in consequence of capital advanced and friendly patronage thus accorded. In the family, therefore, he had the *entrée* of a son, and had enjoyed the opportunity of seeing Rose with a freedom and frequency that soon placed them on the footing of old acquaintanceship. Rose was an easy person to become acquainted with in an ordinary and superficial manner. She was like those pellucid waters whose great clearness deceives the eye as to their depth. Her manners had an easy and gracious frankness; and she spoke right on, with an apparent simplicity and fearlessness that produced at first the impression that you knew all her heart. A longer acquaintance, however, developed depths of reserved thought and feeling far beyond what at first appeared.

Harry, at first, had met her only on those superficial grounds of banter and badinage where a gay young gentleman and a gay young lady may reconnoitre, before either side gives the other the smallest peep of the key of what Dr. Holmes calls the side door of their hearts. Harry, to say the truth, was in a bad way when he first knew Rose: he was restless, reckless, bitter. Turned loose into society with an ample fortune and nothing to do, he was

in danger, according to the homely couplet of Dr. Watts, of being provided with employment by that indescribable personage who makes it his business to look after idle hands.

Rose had attracted him first by her beauty, all the more attractive to him because in a style entirely different from that which hitherto had captivated his imagination. Rose was tall, well-knit, and graceful, and bore herself with a sort of slender but majestic lightness, like a meadow-lily. Her well-shaped, classical head was set finely on her graceful neck, and she had a staglike way of carrying it, that impressed a stranger sometimes as haughty; but Rose could not help that, it was a trick of nature. Her hair was of the glossiest black, her skin fair as marble, her nose a little, nicely turned aquiline affair, her eyes of a deep violet blue and shadowed by long dark lashes, her mouth a little larger than the classical proportion, but generous in smiles and laughs which revealed perfect teeth of dazzling whiteness. There, gentlemen and ladies, is Rose Ferguson's picture: and if you add to all this the most attractive impulsiveness and self-unconsciousness, you will not wonder that Harry Endicott at first found himself admiring her, and fancied driving out with her in the Park; and that when admiring eyes followed them both, as a handsome pair, Harry was well pleased.

Rose, too, liked Harry Endicott. A young girl of twenty is not a severe judge of a handsome, lively young man, who knows far more of the world than she does; and though Harry's conversation was a perfect Catherine wheel of all sorts of wild talk, — sneering, bitter, and skeptical, and giving expression to the most heterodox sentiments, with the evident intention of shocking respectable authorities, — Rose rather liked him than otherwise; though she now and then took the liberty to stand upon her dignity, and opened her great blue eyes on him with a grave, in-

quiring look of surprise, — a look that seemed to challenge him to stand and defend himself. From time to time, too, she let fall little bits of independent opinion, well poised and well turned, that hit exactly where she meant they should; and Harry began to stand a little in awe of her.

Harry had never known a woman like Rose; a woman so poised and self-centred, so cultivated, so capable of deep and just reflections, and so religious. His experience with women had not been fortunate, as has been seen in this narrative; and insensibly to himself, Rose was beginning to exercise an influence over him. The sphere around her was cool and bright and wholesome, as different from the hot atmosphere of passion and sentiment and flirtation, to which he had been accustomed, as a New England summer morning from a sultry night in the tropics. Her power over him was in the appeal to a wholly different part of his nature, — intellect, conscience, and religious sensibility; and once or twice he found himself speaking to her quietly, seriously, and rationally, not from the purpose of pleasing her, but because she had aroused such a strain of thought in his own mind. There was a certain class of brilliant sayings of his, of a cleverly irreligious and skeptical nature, at which Rose never laughed: when this sort of firework was let off in her presence she opened her eyes upon him, wide and blue, with a calm surprise intermixed with pity, but said nothing; and after trying the experiment several times, he gradually felt this silent kind of look a restraint upon him.

At the same time, it must not be conjectured that, at present, Harry Endicott was thinking of falling in love with Rose. In fact, he scoffed at the idea of love, and professed to disbelieve in its existence. And beside all this, he was gratifying an idle vanity and the wicked love of revenge in visiting Lillie; sometimes professing for

days an exclusive devotion to her, in which there was a little too much reality on both sides to be at all safe or innocent; and then, when he had wound her up to the point where even her involuntary looks and words and actions towards him must have compromised her in the eyes of others, he would suddenly recede for days, and devote himself exclusively to Rose; driving ostentatiously with her in the Park, where he would meet Lillie face to face, and bow triumphantly to her in passing. All these proceedings, talked over with Mrs. Follingsbee, seemed to give promise of the most impassioned French romance possible.

Rose walked through all her part in this little drama wrapped in a veil of sacred ignorance. Had she known the whole, the probability is that she would have refused Harry's acquaintance; but like many another nice girl, she tripped gayly near to pitfalls and chasms of which she had not the remotest conception.

Lillie's want of self-control, and imprudent conduct, had laid her open to reports in certain circles where such reports find easy credence; but these were circles with which the Van Astrachans never mingled. The only accidental point of contact was the intimacy of Rose with the Seymour family; and Rose was the last person to understand an allusion if she heard it. The reading of Rose had been carefully selected by her father, and had not embraced any novels of the French romantic school; neither had she, like some modern young ladies, made her mind a highway for the tramping of every kind of possible fictitious character which a novelist might choose to draw, nor taken an interest in the dissections of morbid anatomy. In fact, she was old fashioned enough to like Scott's novels; and though she was just the kind of girl Thackeray would have loved, she never could bring her fresh young heart to enjoy his pictures of world-worn and decaying

natures. The idea of sentimental flirtations and love-making on the part of a married woman was one so beyond her conception of possibilities that it would have been very difficult to make her understand or believe it.

On the occasion of the Follingsbee party, therefore, Rose accepted Harry as an escort in simple good faith. She was by no means so wise as not to have a deal of curiosity about it, and not a little of dazed and dazzled sense of enjoyment in prospect of the perfect labyrinth of fairyland which the Follingsbee mansion opened before her.

On the eventful evening, Mrs. Follingsbee and Lillie stood together to receive their guests, — the former in gold color, with magnificent point lace and diamond tiara; while Lillie in heavenly blue, with wreaths of misty tulle and pearl ornaments, seemed like a filmy cloud by the setting sun. Rose, entering on Harry Endicott's arm, in the full bravery of a well-chosen toilet, caused a buzz of admiration which followed them through the rooms; but Rose was nothing to the illuminated eyes of Mrs. Follingsbee compared with the portly form of Mrs. Van Astrachan entering beside her, and spreading over her the wings of motherly protection. That much-desired matron, serene in her point lace and diamonds, beamed around her with an innocent kindliness, shedding respectability wherever she moved, as a certain Russian prince was said to shed diamonds.

"Why, that is Mrs. Van Astrachan!"

"You don't tell me so! Is it possible?"

"Which?" "Where is she?" "How in the world did she get here?" were the whispered remarks that followed her wherever she moved; and Mrs. Follingsbee, looking after her, could hardly suppress an exulting Te Deum. It was done, and could n't be undone.

Mrs. Van Astrachan might not appear again at a salon of hers for a year; but that could not do away the patent fact, witnessed by so many eyes, that she had been there

once. Just as a modern newspaper or magazine wants only one article of a celebrated author to announce him as among its stated contributors for all time, and to flavor every subsequent issue of the journal with expectancy, so Mrs. Follingsbee exulted in the idea that this one evening would flavor all her receptions for the winter, whether the good lady's diamonds ever appeared there again or not. In her secret heart, she always had the perception, when striving to climb up on this kind of ladder, that the time might come when she should be found out; and she well knew the absolute and uncomprehending horror with which that good lady would regard the French principles and French practice of which Charlie Ferrola and Co. were the expositors and exemplars.

This was what Charlie Ferrola meant when he said that the Van Astrachans were obtuse. They never could be brought to the niceties of moral perspective which show one exactly where to find the vanishing point for every duty.

Be that as it may, there, at any rate, she was, safe and sound; surrounded by people whom she had never met before, and receiving introductions to the right and left with the utmost graciousness. The arrangements for the evening had been made at the tea-table of the Van Astrachans with an innocent and trustful simplicity.

"You know, dear," said Mrs. Van Astrachan to Rose, "that I never like to stay long away from papa" (so the worthy lady called her husband); "and so, if it 's just the same to you, you shall let me have the carriage come for me early and then you and Harry shall be left free to see it out. I know young folks must be young," she said, with a comfortable laugh. "There was a time, dear, when my waist was not bigger than yours, that I used to dance all night with the best of them; but I 've got bravely over that now."

"Yes, Rose," said Mr. Van Astrachan, "you may n't

believe it, but ma there was the spryest dancer of any of the girls. You are pretty nice to look at, but you don't quite come up to what she was in those days. I tell you, I wish you could have seen her," said the good man, warming to his subject. "Why, I've seen the time when every fellow on the floor was after her."

"Papa," says Mrs. Van Astrachan reprovingly, "I would n't say such things if I were you."

"Yes, I would," said Rose. "Do tell us, Mr. Van Astrachan."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Mr. Van Astrachan: "you ought to have seen her in a red dress she used to wear."

"Oh, come, papa! what nonsense! Rose, I never wore a red dress in my life; it was a pink silk; but you know men never do know the names for colors."

"Well, at any rate," said Mr. Van Astrachan hardily, "pink or red, no matter; but I'll tell you, she took all before her that evening. There were Stuyvesants and Van Rensselaers and Livingstons, and all sorts of grand fellows in her train; but, somehow, I cut 'em out. There is no such dancing nowadays as there was when wife and I were young. I've been caught once or twice in one of their parties; and I don't call it dancing. I call it draggle-tailing. They don't take any steps, and there is no spirit in it."

"Well," said Rose, "I know we moderns are very much to be pitied. Papa always tells me the same story about mamma and the days when he was young. But, dear Mrs. Van Astrachan, I hope you won't stay a moment, on my account, after you get tired. I suppose if you are just seen with me there in the beginning of the evening it will matronize me enough; and then I have engaged to dance the german with Mr. Endicott, and I believe they keep that up till nobody knows when. But I am determined to see the whole through."

"Yes, yes! see it all through," said Mr. Van Astrachan. "Young people must be young. It's all right enough, and you won't miss my Polly after you get fairly into it near so much as I shall. I'll sit up for her till twelve o'clock, and read my paper."

Rose was at first, to say the truth, bewildered and surprised by the perfect labyrinth of fairy-land which Charlie Ferrola's artistic imagination had created in the Follingsbee mansion. Initiated people, who had traveled in Europe, said it put them in mind of the Jardin Mabille; and those who had not were reminded of some of the wonders of "The Black Crook." There were apartments turned into bowers and grottoes, where the gaslight shimmered behind veils of falling water, and through pendent leaves of all sorts of strange water-plants of tropical regions. There were all those wonderful leaf-plants of every weird device of color, which have been conjured up by tricks of modern gardening, as Rappaccini is said to have created his strange garden in Padua. There were beds of hyacinths and crocuses and tulips, made to appear like living gems by the jets of gaslight which came up among them in glass flowers of the same form. Far away in recesses were sofas of soft green velvet turf, overshadowed by trailing vines, and illuminated with moonlight softness by hidden alabaster lamps. The air was heavy with the perfume of flowers, and the sound of music and dancing from the ballroom came to these recesses softened by distance.

The Follingsbee mansion occupied a whole square of the city; and these enchanted bowers were created by temporary enlargements of the conservatory covering the ground of the garden. With money, and the Croton Water-Works, and all the New York greenhouses at disposal, nothing was impossible.

There was in this reception no vulgar rush or crush or jam. The apartments opened were so extensive, and the

attractions in so many different directions, that there did not appear to be a crowd anywhere. There was no general table set, with the usual liabilities of rush and crush; but four or five well-kept rooms, fragrant with flowers and sparkling with silver and crystal, were ready at any hour to minister to the guest whatever delicacy or dainty he or she might demand; and light-footed waiters circulated with noiseless obsequiousness through all the rooms, proffering dainties on silver trays.

Mrs. Van Astrachan and Rose at first found themselves walking everywhere, with a fresh and lively interest. It was something quite out of the line of the good lady's previous experience, and so different from anything she had ever seen before as to keep her in a state of placid astonishment. Rose, on the other hand, was delighted and excited; the more so that she could not help perceiving that she herself amid all these objects of beauty was followed by the admiring glances of many eyes.

It is not to be supposed that a girl so handsome as Rose comes to her twentieth year without having the pretty secret made known to her in more ways than one, or that thus made known it is anything but agreeable; but, on the present occasion, there was a buzz of inquiry and a crowd of applicants about her; and her dancing-list seemed in a fair way to be soon filled up for the evening, Harry telling her laughingly that he would let her off from everything but the german; but that she might consider her engagement with him as a standing one whenever troubled with an application which for any reason she did not wish to accept.

Harry assumed towards Rose that air of brotherly guardianship which a young man who piques himself on having seen a good deal of the world likes to take with a pretty girl who knows less of it. Besides, he rather valued himself on having brought to the reception the most brilliant girl of the evening.

Our friend Lillie, however, was in her own way as entrancingly beautiful this evening as the most perfect mortal flesh and blood could be made; and Harry went back to her when Rose went off with her partners as a moth flies to a candle, not with any express intention of burning his wings, but simply because he likes to be dazzled, and likes the bitter excitement. He felt now that he had power over her, — a bad, a dangerous power he knew, with what of conscience was left in him; but he thought, "Let her take her own risk." And so, many busy gossips saw the handsome young man, his great dark eyes kindled with an evil light, whirling in dizzy mazes with this cloud of flossy mist; out of which looked up to him an impassioned woman's face, and eyes that said what those eyes had no right to say.

There are times, in such scenes of bewilderment, when women are as truly out of their own control by nervous excitement as if they were intoxicated; and Lillie's looks and words and actions towards Harry were as open a declaration of her feelings as if she had spoken them aloud to every one present. The scandals about them were confirmed in the eyes of every one that looked on; for there were plenty of people present in whose view of things the worst possible interpretation was the most probable one.

Rose was in the way, during the course of the evening, of hearing remarks of the most disagreeable and startling nature with regard to the relations of Harry and Lillie to each other. They filled her with a sort of horror, as if she had come to an unwholesome place; while she indignantly repelled them from her thoughts, as every uncontaminated woman will the first suspicion of the purity of a sister woman. In Rose's view it was monstrous and impossible. Yet when she stood at one time in a group to see them waltzing, she started, and felt a cold shudder, as a certain instinctive conviction of something not right

forced itself on her. She closed her eyes, and wished herself away; wished that she had not let Mrs. Van Astrachan go home without her; wished that somebody would speak to Lillie and caution her; felt an indignant rising of her heart against Harry, and was provoked at herself that she was engaged to him for the german.

She turned away, and taking the arm of the gentleman with her, complained of the heat as oppressive, and they sauntered off together into the bowery region beyond.

"Oh, now! where can I have left my fan?" she said, suddenly stopping.

"Let me go back and get it for you," said he of the whiskers who attended her. It was one of the dancing young men of New York, and it is no particular matter what his name was.

"Thank you," said Rose; "I believe I left it on the sofa in the yellow drawing-room." He was gone in a moment.

Rose wandered on a little way, through the labyrinth of flowers and shadowy trees and fountains, and sat down on an artificial rock, where she fell into a deep reverie. Rising to go back, she missed her way, and became quite lost, and went on uneasily, conscious that she had committed a rudeness in not waiting for her attendant.

At this moment she looked through a distant alcove of shrubbery, and saw Harry and Lillie standing together, — she with both hands laid upon his arm, looking up to him and speaking rapidly with an imploring accent. She saw him, with an angry frown, push Lillie from him so rudely that she almost fell backward, and sat down with her handkerchief to her eyes; he came forward hurriedly, and met the eyes of Rose fixed upon him.

"Mr. Endicott," she said, "I have to ask a favor of you. Will you be so good as to excuse me from the german to-night, and order my carriage?"

"Why, Miss Ferguson, what is the matter?" he said: "what has come over you? I hope I have not had the misfortune to do anything to displease you?"

Without replying to this, Rose answered, "I feel very unwell. My head is aching violently, and I cannot go through the rest of the evening. I must go home at once." She spoke it in a decided tone that admitted of no question.

Without answer Harry Endicott gave her his arm, accompanied her through the final leave-takings, went with her to the carriage, put her in, and sprang in after her. Rose sank back on her seat, and remained perfectly silent; and Harry, after a few remarks of his had failed to elicit a reply, rode by her side equally silent through the streets homeward. He had Mr. Van Astrachan's latch-key; and when the carriage stopped, he helped Rose to alight, and went up the steps of the house.

"Miss Ferguson," he said abruptly, "I have something I want to say to you."

"Not now, not to-night," said Rose hurriedly. "I am too tired, and it is too late."

"To-morrow then," he said: "I shall call when you will have had time to be rested. Good-night!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE SPIDER-WEB BROKEN

Harry did not go back to lead the german, as he had been engaged to do. In fact, in his last apologies to Mrs. Follingsbee, he had excused himself on account of his partner's sudden indisposition, — a thing which made no small buzz and commotion, though the missing gap, like all gaps great and little in human society, soon found somebody to step into it, and the dance went on just as gayly as if they had been there.

Meanwhile, there were in this good city of New York a couple of sleepless individuals, revolving many things uneasily during the night watches, or at least that portion of the night watches that remained after they reached home, — to wit, Mr. Harry Endicott and Miss Rose Ferguson.

What had taken place in that little scene between Lillie and Harry, the termination of which was seen by Rose? We are not going to give a minute description. The public has already been circumstantially instructed by such edifying books as "Cometh Up as a Flower," and others of a like turn, in what manner and in what terms married women can abdicate the dignity of their sex, and degrade themselves so far as to offer their whole life, and their whole selves, to some reluctant man with too much remaining conscience or prudence to accept the sacrifice.

It was from some such wild, passionate utterances of Lillie that Harry felt a recoil of mingled conscience, fear, and that disgust which man feels when she, whom God

made to be sought, degrades herself to seek. There is no edification and no propriety in highly colored and minute drawing of such scenes of temptation and degradation, though they are the stock and staple of some French novels, and more disgusting English ones made on their model. Harry felt in his own conscience that he had been acting a most unworthy part, that no advances on the part of Lillie could excuse his conduct; and his thoughts went back somewhat regretfully to the days long ago, when she was a fair, pretty, innocent girl, and he had loved her honestly and truly. Unperceived by himself, the character of Rose was exerting a powerful influence over him; and when he met that look of pain and astonishment which he had seen in her large blue eyes the night before, it seemed to awaken many things within him. It is astonishing how blindly people sometimes go on as to the character of their own conduct, till suddenly, like a torch in a dark place, the light of another person's opinion is thrown in upon them, and they begin to judge themselves under the quickening influence of another person's moral magnetism. Then, indeed, it often happens that the graves give up their dead, and that there is a sort of interior resurrection and judgment.

Harry did not seem to be consciously thinking of Rose, and yet the undertone of all that night's uneasiness was a something that had been roused and quickened in him by his acquaintance with her. How he loathed himself for the last few weeks of his life! How he loathed that hot, lurid, murky atmosphere of flirtation and passion and French sentimentality in which he had been living! — atmosphere as hard to draw healthy breath in as the odor of wilting tuberoses the day after a party.

Harry valued Rose's good opinion as he had never valued it before; and as he thought of her in his restless tossings, she seemed to him something as pure, as whole-

some, and strong as the air of his native New England hills, as the sweetbrier and sweet-fern he used to love to gather when he was a boy. She seemed of a piece with all the good old ways of New England, — its household virtues, its conscientious sense of right, its exact moral boundaries; and he felt somehow as if she belonged to that healthy portion of his life which he now looked back upon with something of regret.

Then, what would she think of him? They had been friends, he said to himself; they had passed over those boundaries of teasing unreality where most young gentlemen and young ladies are content to hold converse with each other, and had talked together reasonably and seriously, saying in some hours what they really thought and felt. And Rose had impressed him at times by her silence and reticence in certain connections, and on certain subjects, with a sense of something hidden and veiled, — a reserved force that he longed still further to penetrate. But now, he said to himself, he must have fallen in her opinion. Why was she so cold, so almost haughty, in her treatment of him the night before? He felt in the atmosphere around her, and in the touch of her hand, that she was quivering like a galvanic battery with the suppressed force of some powerful emotion; and his own conscience dimly interpreted to him what it might be.

To say the truth, Rose was terribly aroused. And there was a great deal in her to be aroused, for she had a strong nature; and the whole force of womanhood in her had never received such a shock.

Whatever may be scoffingly said of the readiness of women to pull one another down, it is certain that the highest class of them have the feminine *esprit de corps* immensely strong. The humiliation of another woman seems to them their own humiliation; and man's lordly contempt for another woman seems like contempt of themselves.

The deepest feeling roused in Rose by the scenes which she saw last night was concern for the honor of womanhood; and her indignation at first did not strike where we are told woman's indignation does, on the woman, but on the man. Loving John Seymour as a brother from her childhood, feeling in the intimacy in which they had grown up as if their families had been one, the thoughts that had been forced upon her of his wife the night before had struck to her heart with the weight of a terrible affliction. She judged Lillie as a pure woman generally judges another, out of herself, — and could not and would not believe that the gross and base construction which had been put upon her conduct was the true one. She looked upon her as led astray by inordinate vanity, and the hopeless levity of an undeveloped, unreflecting habit of mind. She was indignant with Harry for the part that he had taken in the affair, and indignant and vexed with herself for the degree of freedom and intimacy which she had been suffering to grow up between him and herself. Her first impulse was to break it off altogether, and have nothing more to say to or do with him. She felt as if she would like to take the short course which young girls sometimes take out of the first serious mortification or trouble in their lives, and run away from it altogether. She would have liked to have packed her trunk, taken her seat on board the cars, and gone home to Springdale the next day, and forgotten all about the whole of it; but then, what should she say to Mrs. Van Astrachan? what account could she give for the sudden breaking up of her visit?

Then, there was Harry going to call on her the next day! What ought she to say to him? On the whole, it was a delicate matter for a young girl of twenty to manage alone. How she longed to have the counsel of her sister or her mother! She thought of Mrs. Van Astrachan; but then, again, she did not wish to disturb that good lady's

pleasant, confidential relations with Harry, and tell tales of him out of school; so, on the whole, she had a restless and uncomfortable night of it.

Mrs. Van Astrachan expressed her surprise at seeing Rose take her place at the breakfast-table the next morning. "Dear me!" she said, "I was just telling Jane to have some breakfast kept for you. I had no idea of seeing you down at this time."

"But," said Rose, "I gave out entirely, and came away only an hour after you did. The fact is, we country girls can't stand this sort of thing. I had such a terrible headache, and felt so tired and exhausted, that I got Mr. Endicott to bring me away before the german."

"Bless me!" said Mr. Van Astrachan; "why, you 're not at all up to snuff! Why, Polly, you and I used to stick it out till daylight! did n't we?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Van Astrachan, I had n't anybody like you to stick it out with," said Rose. "Perhaps that made the difference."

"Oh, well, now, I am sure there 's our Harry! I am sure a girl must be difficult if he does n't suit her for a beau," said the good gentleman.

"Oh, Mr. Endicott is all well enough!" said Rose; "only, you observe, not precisely to me what you were to the lady you call Polly, — that 's all."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Van Astrachan. "Well, to be sure, that does make a difference; but Harry 's a nice fellow, nice fellow, Miss Rose; not many fellows like him, as I think."

"Yes, indeed," chimed in Mrs. Van Astrachan. "I have n't a son in the world that I think more of than I do of Harry; he has such a good heart."

Now, the fact was, this eulogistic strain that the worthy couple were very prone to fall into in speaking of Harry to Rose was this morning most especially annoying to her;

and she turned the subject at once, by chattering so fluently, and with such minute details of description, about the arrangements of the rooms and the flowers and the lamps and the fountains and the cascades, and all the fairy-land wonders of the Follingsbee party, that the good pair found themselves constrained to be listeners during the rest of the time devoted to the morning meal.

It will be found that good young ladies, while of course they have all the innocence of the dove, do display upon emergencies a considerable share of the wisdom of the serpent. And on this same mother wit and wisdom Rose called internally, when that day, about eleven o'clock, she was summoned to the library, to give Harry his audience.

Truth to say, she was in a state of excited womanhood vastly becoming to her general appearance, and entered the library with flushed cheeks and head erect, like one prepared to stand for herself and for her sex. Harry, however, wore a mortified, semi-penitential air, that, on the first glance, rather mollified her. Still, however, she was not sufficiently clement to give him the least assistance in opening the conversation, by the suggestions of any of those nice little oily nothings with which ladies, when in a gracious mood, can smooth the path for a difficult confession. She sat very quietly, with her hands before her, while Harry walked tumultuously up and down the room.

"Miss Ferguson," he said at last abruptly, "I know you are thinking ill of me."

Miss Ferguson did not reply.

"I had hoped," he said, "that there had been a little something more than mere acquaintance between us. I had hoped you looked upon me as a friend."

"I did, Mr. Endicott," said Rose.

"And you do not now?"

"I cannot say that," she said, after a pause; "but, Mr. Endicott, if we are friends, you must give me the liberty to speak plainly."

"That 's exactly what I want you to do!" he said impetuously; "that is just what I wish."

"Allow me to ask, then, if you are an early friend and family connection of Mrs. John Seymour?"

"I was an early friend, and am somewhat of a family connection."

"That is, I understand there has been a ground in your past history for you to be on a footing of a certain family intimacy with Mrs. Seymour; in that case, Mr. Endicott, I think you ought to have considered yourself the guardian of her honor and reputation, and not allowed her to be compromised on your account."

The blood flushed into Harry's face, and he stood abashed and silent. Rose went on, "I was shocked, I was astonished, last night, because I could not help overhearing the most disagreeable, the most painful remarks on you and her, — remarks most unjust, I am quite sure, but for which I fear you have given too much reason!"

"Miss Ferguson," said Harry, stopping as he walked up and down, "I confess I have been wrong and done wrong; but if you knew all, you might see how I have been led into it. That woman has been the evil fate of my life. Years ago, when we were both young, I loved her as honestly as man could love a woman; and she professed to love me in return. But I was poor, and she would not marry me. She sent me off, yet she would not let me forget her. She would always write to me just enough to keep up hope and interest; and she knew for years that all my object in striving for fortune was to win her. At last, when a lucky stroke made me suddenly rich, and I came home to seek her, I found her married, — married, as she owns, without love, — married for wealth and ambition. I don't justify myself, — I don't pretend to; but when she met me with her old smiles and her old charms, and told me she loved me still, it roused the very devil

in me. I wanted revenge. I wanted to humble her, and make her suffer all she had made me; and I did n't care what came of it."

Harry spoke, trembling with emotion; and Rose felt almost terrified with the storm she had raised.

"Oh, Mr. Endicott!" she said, "was this worthy of you? was there nothing better, higher, more manly than this poor revenge? You men are stronger than we: you have the world in your hands; you have a thousand resources where we have only one. And you ought to be stronger and nobler according to your advantages; you ought to rise superior to the temptations that beset a poor, weak, ill-educated woman, whom everybody has been flattering from her cradle, and whom you, I dare say, have helped to flatter, turning her head with compliments, like all the rest of them. Come, now, is not there something in that?"

"Well, I suppose," said Harry, "that when Lillie and I were girl and boy together, I did flatter her, sincerely that is. Her beauty made a fool of me; and I helped make a fool of her."

"And I dare say," said Rose, "you told her that all she was made for was to be charming, and encouraged her to live the life of a butterfly or canary-bird. Did you ever try to strengthen her principles, to educate her mind, to make her strong? On the contrary, have n't you been bowing down and adoring her for being weak? It seems to me that Lillie is exactly the kind of woman that you men educate, by the way you look on women, and the way you treat them."

Harry sat in silence, ruminating.

"Now," said Rose, "it seems to me it 's the most cowardly and unmanly thing in the world for men, with every advantage in their hands, with all the strength that their kind of education gives them, with all their opportunities,

— a thousand to our one, — to hunt down these poor little silly women, whom society keeps stunted and dwarfed for their special amusement."

"Miss Ferguson, you are very severe," said Harry, his face flushing.

"Well," said Rose, "you have this advantage, Mr. Endicott: you know, if I am, the world will not be. Everybody will take your part; everybody will smile on you, and condemn her. That is generous, is it not? I think, after all, Noah Claypole is n't so very uncommon a picture of the way that your lordly sex turn round and cast all the blame on ours. You will never make me believe in a protracted flirtation between a gentleman and lady, where at least half the blame does not lie on his lordship's side. I always said that a woman had no need to have offers made her by a man she could not love, if she conducted herself properly; and I think the same is true in regard to men. But then, as I said before, you have the world on your side; nine persons out of ten see no possible harm in a man's taking every advantage of a woman, if she will let him."

"But I care more for the opinion of the tenth person than of the nine," said Harry; "I care more for what you think than any of them. Your words are severe, but I think they are just."

"Oh, Mr. Endicott!" said Rose, "live for something higher than for what I think, — than for what any one thinks. Think how many glorious chances there are for a noble career for a young man with your fortune, with your leisure, with your influence! is it for you to waste life in this unworthy way? If I had your chances I would try to do something worth doing."

Rose's face kindled with enthusiasm, and Harry looked at her with admiration. "Tell me what I ought to do!" he said.

"I cannot tell you," said Rose; "but where there is a will there is a way; and if you have the will, you will find the way. But, first, you must try and repair the mischief you have done to Lillie. By your own account of the matter, you have been encouraging and keeping up a sort of silly, romantic excitement in her. It is worse than silly; it is sinful. It is trifling with her best interests in this life and the life to come. And I think you must know that, if you had treated her like an honest, plain-spoken brother or cousin, without any trumpery of gallantry or sentiment, things would have never got to be as they are. You could have prevented all this; and you can put an end to it now."

"Honestly, I will try," said Harry. "I will begin, by confessing my faults like a good boy, and take the blame on myself where it belongs, and try to make Lillie see things like a good girl. But she is in bad surroundings, and if I were her husband, I would n't let her stay there another day. There are no morals in that circle; it 's all a perfect crush of decaying garbage."

"I think," said Rose, "that if this thing goes no further, it will gradually die out even in that circle; and in the better circles of New York, I trust it will not be heard of. Mrs. Van Astrachan and I will appear publicly with Lillie; and if she is seen with us, and at this house, it will be sufficient to contradict a dozen slanders. She has the noblest, kindest husband, — one of the best men and truest gentlemen I ever knew."

"I pity him then," said Harry.

"He is to be pitied," said Rose; "but his work is before him. This woman, such as she is, with all her faults, he has taken for better or for worse; and all true friends and good people, both his and hers, should help both sides to make the best of it."

"I should say," said Harry, "that there is in this no best side."

"I think you do Lillie injustice," said Rose. "There is, and must be, good in every one; and gradually the good in him will overcome the evil in her."

"Let us hope so," said Harry. "And now, Miss Ferguson, may I hope that you won't quite cross my name out of your good book? You 'll be friends with me, won't you?"

"Oh, certainly!" said Rose, with a frank smile.

"Well, let 's shake hands on that," said Harry, rising to go.

Rose gave him her hand, and the two parted in all amity.

CHAPTER XXIII

COMMON-SENSE ARGUMENTS

HARRY went straightway from the interview to call upon Lillie, and had a conversation with her; in which he conducted himself like a sober, discreet, and rational man. It was one of those daylight, matter-of-fact kinds of talks, with no nonsense about them, in which things are called by their right names. He confessed his own sins, and took upon his own shoulders the blame that properly belonged there, and having thus cleared his conscience, took occasion to give Lillie a deal of grandfatherly advice, of a very sedative tendency.

They had both been very silly, he said; and the next step to being silly very often was to be wicked. For his part, he thought she ought to be thankful for so good a husband; and for his own part, he should lose no time in trying to find a good wife, who would help him to be a good man, and do something worth doing in the world. He had given people occasion to say ill-natured things about her, and he was sorry for it. But if they stopped being imprudent, the world would in time stop talking. He hoped, some of these days, to bring his wife down to see her, and to make the acquaintance of her husband, whom he knew to be a capital fellow, and one that she ought to be proud of.

Thus, by the intervention of good angels, the little paper-nautilus bark of Lillie's fortunes was prevented from going down in the great ugly maelstrom, on the verge of which it had been so heedlessly sailing.

Harry was not slow in pushing the advantage of his treaty of friendship with Rose to its utmost limits, and being a young gentleman of parts and proficiency, he made rapid progress. The interview of course immediately bred the necessity for at least a dozen more; for he had to explain this thing, and qualify that, and, on reflection, would find by the next day that the explanation and qualification required a still further elucidation. Rose also, after the first conversation was over, was troubled at her own boldness, and at the things that she in her state of excitement had said, and so was only too glad to accord interviews and explanations as often as sought, and, on the whole, was in the most favorable state towards her penitent. Hence came many calls, and many conferences with Rose in the library, to Mrs. Van Astrachan's great satisfaction, and concerning which Mr. Van Astrachan had many suppressed chuckles and knowing winks at Polly.

"Now, pa, don't you say a word," said Mrs. Van Astrachan.

"Oh no, Polly! catch me! I see a great deal, but I say nothing," said the good gentleman, with a jocular quiver of his portly person. "I don't say anything, — oh no! by no manner of means."

Neither at present did Harry; neither do we.

CHAPTER XXIV

SENTIMENT VERSUS SENSIBILITY

THE poet has feelingly sung the condition of the

> "banquet-hall deserted,
> Whose lights are fled,
> Whose garlands dead," etc.,

and so we need not cast the daylight of minute description on the Follingsbee mansion.

Charlie Ferrola, however, was summoned away at early daylight, just as the last of the revelers were dispersing, by a hurried messenger from his wife; and a few moments after he entered his house, he was standing beside his dying baby, — the little fellow whom we have seen brought down on Mrs. Ferrola's arm, to greet the call of Mrs. Follingsbee.

It is an awful thing for people of the flimsy, vain, pain-shunning, pleasure-seeking character of Charlie Ferrola to be taken at times, as such people will be, in the grip of an inexorable power, and held face to face with the sternest, the most awful, the most frightful realities of life. Charlie Ferrola was one of those whose softness and pitifulness, like that of sentimentalists generally, was only one form of intense selfishness. The sight of suffering pained him; and his first impulse was to get out of the way of it. Suffering that he did not see was nothing to him; and if his wife or children were in any trouble, he would have liked very well to have known nothing about it.

But here he was, by the bedside of this little creature, dying in the agonies of slow suffocation, rolling up its

dark, imploring eyes, and lifting its poor little helpless hands; and Charlie Ferrola broke out into the most violent and extravagant demonstrations of grief. The pale, firm little woman, who had watched all night, and in whose tranquil face a light as if from heaven was beaming, had to assume the care of him, in addition to that of her dying child. He was another helpless burden on her hands.

There came a day when the house was filled with white flowers, and people came and went, and holy words were spoken; and the fairest flower of all was carried out, to return to the house no more.

"That woman is a most unnatural and peculiar woman!" said Mrs. Follingsbee, who had been most active and patronizing in sending flowers, and attending to the scenic arrangements of the funeral. "It is just what I always said: she is a perfect statue; she 's no kind of feeling. There was Charlie, poor fellow! so sick that he had to go to bed, perfectly overcome, and have somebody to sit up with him; and there was that woman never shed a tear, — went round attending to everything, just like a piece of clockwork. Well, I suppose people are happier for being made so; people that have no sensibility are better fitted to get through the world. But, gracious me! I can't understand such people. There she stood at the grave, looking so calm, when Charlie was sobbing so that he could hardly hold himself up. Well, it really was n't respectable. I think, at least, I would keep my veil down, and keep my handkerchief up. Poor Charlie! he came to me at last; and I gave way. I was completely broken down, I must confess. Poor fellow! he told me there was no conceiving his misery. That baby was the very idol of his soul; all his hopes of life were centred in it. He really felt tempted to rebel at Providence. He said that he really could not talk with his wife on the subject. He could not enter into her submission at all; it seemed to

him like a want of feeling. He said of course it was n't her fault that she was made one way and he another."

In fact, Mr. Charlie Ferrola took to the pink satin boudoir with a more languishing persistency than ever, requiring to be stayed with flagons, and comforted with apples, and receiving sentimental calls of condolence from fair admirers, made aware of the intense poignancy of his grief. A lovely poem, called "My Withered Blossom," which appeared in a fashionable magazine shortly after, was the outcome of this experience, and increased the fashionable sympathy to the highest degree.

Honest Mrs. Van Astrachan, however, though not acquainted with Mrs. Ferrola, went to the funeral with Rose, and the next day her carriage was seen at Mrs. Ferrola's door.

"You poor little darling!" she said, as she came up and took Mrs. Ferrola in her arms. "You must let me come, and not mind me; for I know all about it. I lost the dearest little baby once; and I have never forgotten it. There! there, darling!" she said, as the little woman broke into sobs in her arms. "Yes, yes; do cry! it will do your little heart good."

There are people who, wherever they move, freeze the hearts of those they touch, and chill all demonstration of feeling; and there are warm natures, that unlock every fountain, and bid every feeling gush forth. The reader has seen these two types in this story.

"Wife," said Mr. Van Astrachan, coming to Mrs. V. confidentially a day or two after, "I wonder if you remember any of your French. What is a *liaison?*"

"Really, dear," said Mrs. Van Astrachan, whose reading of late years had been mostly confined to such memoirs as that of Mrs. Isabella Graham, Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," and Baxter's "Saint's Rest," "it 's a great while

since I read any French. What do you want to know for?"

"Well, there's Ben Stuyvesant was saying this morning, in Wall Street, that there's a great deal of talk about that Mrs. Follingsbee and that young fellow whose baby's funeral you went to. Ben says there's a *liaison* between her and him. I didn't ask him what 't was; but it's something or other with a French name that makes talk, and I don't think it's respectable! I'm sorry that you and Rose went to her party; but then that can't be helped now. I'm afraid this Mrs. Follingsbee is no sort of a woman, after all."

"But, pa, I've been to call on Mrs. Ferrola, poor little afflicted thing!" said Mrs. Van Astrachan. "I couldn't help it! You know how we felt when little Willie died."

"Oh, certainly, Polly! call on the poor woman by all means, and do all you can to comfort her; but from all I can find out, that handsome jackanapes of a husband of hers is just the poorest trash going. They say this Follingsbee woman half supports him. The time was in New York when such doings wouldn't be allowed; and I don't think calling things by French names makes them a bit better. So you just be careful, and steer as clear of her as you can."

"I will, pa, just as clear as I can; but you know Rose is a friend of Mrs. John Seymour; and Mrs. Seymour is visiting at Mrs. Follingsbee's."

"Her husband oughtn't to let her stay there another day," said Mr. Van Astrachan. "It's as much as any woman's reputation is worth to be staying with her. To think of that fellow being dancing and capering at that Jezebel's house the night his baby was dying!"

"Oh, but, pa, he didn't know it."

"Know it? he ought to have known it! What business has a man to get a woman with a lot of babies round her,

and then go capering off? 'T was n't the way I did, Polly, you know, when our babies were young. I was always on the spot there, ready to take the baby, and walk up and down with it nights, so that you might get your sleep; and I always had it my side of the bed half the night. I 'd like to have seen myself out at a ball, and you sitting up with a sick baby! I tell you, that if I caught any of my boys up to such tricks, I 'd cut them out of my will, and settle the money on their wives, — that 's what I would!"

"Well, pa, I shall try and do all in my power for poor Mrs. Ferrola," said Mrs. Van Astrachan; "and you may be quite sure I won't take another step towards Mrs. Follingsbee's acquaintance."

"It 's a pity," said Mr. Van Astrachan, "that somebody could n't put it into Mr. John Seymour's head to send for his wife.

"I don't see, for my part, what respectable women want to be gallivanting and high-flying on their own separate account for, away from their husbands! Goods that are sold should n't go back to the shop-windows," said the good gentleman, all whose views of life were of the most old-fashioned, domestic kind.

"Well, dear, we don't want to talk to Rose about any of this scandal," said his wife.

"No, no; it would be a pity to put anything bad into a nice girl's head," said Mr. Van Astrachan. "You might caution her in a general way, you know; tell her, for instance, that I 've heard of things that make me feel you ought to draw off. Why can't some bird of the air tell that little Seymour woman's husband to get her home?"

The little Seymour woman's husband, though not warned by any particular bird of the air, was not backward in taking steps for the recall of his wife, as shall hereafter appear.

CHAPTER XXV

WEDDING BELLS

Some weeks had passed in Springdale while these affairs had been going on in New York. The time for the marriage of Grace had been set, and she had gone to Boston to attend to that preparatory shopping which even the most sensible of the sex discover to be indispensable on such occasions.

Grace inclined, in the centre of her soul, to Bostonian rather than New York preferences. She had the innocent impression that a classical severity and a rigid reticence of taste pervaded even the rebellious department of feminine millinery in the city of the Pilgrims, — an idea which we rather think young Boston would laugh down as an exploded superstition, young Boston's leading idea at the present hour being apparently to outdo New York in New York's imitation of Paris.

In fact, Grace found it very difficult to find a milliner who, if left to her own devices, would not befeather and beflower her past all self-recognition, giving to her that generally betousled and flyaway air which comes straight from the *demimonde* of Paris. We apprehend that the recent storms of tribulation which have beat upon those fairy islands of fashion may scatter this frail and fanciful population, and send them by shiploads on missions of civilization to our shores; in which case the bustle and animation and the brilliant display on the old turnpike, spoken of familiarly as the "broad road," will be somewhat increased.

Grace, however, managed, by the exercise of a good individual taste, to come out of these shopping conflicts in good order, — a handsome, well-dressed, charming woman, with everybody's best wishes for and sympathy in her happiness.

Lillie was summoned home by urgent messages from her husband, calling her back to take her share in wedding festivities. She left willingly; for the fact is that her last conversation with her Cousin Harry had made the situation as uncomfortable to her as if he had unceremoniously deluged her with a pailful of cold water.

There is a chilly, disagreeable kind of article, called common sense, which is of all things most repulsive and antipathetical to all petted creatures whose life has consisted in flattery. It is the kind of talk which sisters are very apt to hear from brothers, and daughters from fathers and mothers, when fathers and mothers do their duty by them; which sets the world before them as it is, and not as it is painted by flatterers. Those women who prefer the society of gentlemen, and who have the faculty of bewitching their senses, never are in the way of hearing from this cold matter-of-fact region; for them it really does not exist. Every phrase that meets their ear is polished and softened, guarded and delicately turned, till there is not a particle of homely truth left in it. They pass their time in a world of illusions; they demand these illusions of all who approach them, as the sole condition of peace and favor. All gentlemen, by a sort of instinct, recognize the woman who lives by flattery, and give her her portion of meat in due season; and thus some poor women are hopelessly buried, as suicides used to be in Scotland, under a mountain of rubbish, to which each passer-by adds one stone. It is only by some extraordinary power of circumstances that a man can be found to invade the sovereignty of a pretty woman with any dis-

agreeable tidings; or, as Junius says, "to instruct the throne in the language of truth."

Harry was brought up to this point only by such a concurrence of circumstances. He was in love with another woman, — a ready cause for disenchantment. He was in some sort a family connection; and he saw Lillie's conduct at last, therefore, through the plain, unvarnished medium of common sense. Moreover, he felt a little pinched in his own conscience by the view which Rose seemed to take of his part in the matter, and, manlike, was strengthened in doing his duty by being a little galled and annoyed at the woman whose charms had tempted him into this dilemma. So he talked to Lillie like a brother; or, in other words, made himself disagreeably explicit, — showed her her sins, and told her her duties as a married woman. The charming fair ones who sentimentally desire gentlemen to regard them as sisters do not bargain for any of this sort of brotherly plainness; and yet they might do it with great advantage. A brother, who is not a brother, stationed near the ear of a fair friend, is commonly very careful not to compromise his position by telling unpleasant truths; but on the present occasion Harry made a literal use of the brevet of brotherhood which Lillie had bestowed on him, and talked to her as the generality of real brothers talk to their sisters, using great plainness of speech. He withered all her poor little trumpery array of hothouse flowers of sentiment, by treating them as so much garbage, as all men know they are. He set before her the gravity and dignity of marriage, and her duties to her husband. Last, and most unkind of all, he professed his admiration of Rose Ferguson, his unworthiness of her, and his determination to win her by a nobler and better life; and then showed himself to be a stupid blunderer by exhorting Lillie to make Rose her model, and seek to imitate her virtues.

Poor Lillie! the world looked dismal and dreary enough to her. She shrunk within herself. Everything was withered and disenchanted. All her poor little stock of romance seemed to her as disgusting as the withered flowers and crumpled finery and half-melted ice-cream the morning after a ball. In this state, when she got a warm, true letter from John, who always grew tender and affectionate when she was long away, couched in those terms of admiration and affection that were soothing to her ear, she really longed to go back to him. She shrunk from the dreary plainness of truth, and longed for flattery and petting and caresses once more; and she wrote to John an overflowingly tender letter, full of longings, which brought him at once to her side, the most delighted of men. When Lillie cried in his arms, and told him that she found New York perfectly hateful; when she declaimed on the heartlessness of fashionable life, and longed to go with him to their quiet home, she was tolerably in earnest, and John was perfectly enchanted.

Poor John! Was he a muff, a spoon? We think not. We understand well that there is not a woman among our readers who has the slightest patience with Lillie, and that the most of them are half out of patience with John for his enduring tenderness towards her. But men were born and organized by nature to be the protectors of women; and, generally speaking, the stronger and more thoroughly manly a man is, the more he has of what phrenologists call the "pet organ," the disposition which makes him the charmed servant of what is weak and dependent. John had a great share of this quality. He was made to be a protector. He loved to protect; he loved everything that was helpless and weak, — young animals, young children, and delicate women.

He was a romantic adorer of womanhood, as a sort of divine mystery, — a never-ending poem; and when his

wife was long enough away from him to give scope for imagination to work, when she no longer annoyed him with the friction of the sharp little edges of her cold and selfish nature, he was able to see her once more in the ideal light of first love. After all, she was his wife; and in that one word, to a good man, is everything holy and sacred. He longed to believe in her and trust her wholly; and now that Grace was going from him, to belong to another, Lillie was more than ever his dependence.

On the whole, if we must admit that John was weak, he was weak where strong and noble natures may most gracefully be so, — weak through disinterestedness, faith, and the disposition to make the best of the wife he had chosen.

And so Lillie came home; and there was festivity and rejoicing. Grace found herself floated into matrimony on a tide bringing gifts and tokens of remembrance from everybody that had ever known her; for all were delighted with this opportunity of testifying a sense of her worth, and every hand was ready to help ring her wedding bells.

CHAPTER XXVI

MOTHERHOOD

It is supposed by some that to become a mother is of itself a healing and saving dispensation; that of course the reign of selfishness ends, and the reign of better things begins, with the commencement of maternity. But old things do not pass away and all things become new by any such rapid process of conversion. A whole life spent in self-seeking and self-pleasing is no preparation for the most august and austere of woman's sufferings and duties; and it is not to be wondered at if the untrained, untaught, and self-indulgent shrink from this ordeal, as Lillie did.

The next spring, while the gables of the new cottage on Elm Street were looking picturesquely through the blossoming cherry-trees, and the smoke was curling up from the chimneys where Grace and her husband were cosily settled down together, there came to John's house another little Lillie. The little creature came in terror and trembling; for the mother had trifled fearfully with the great laws of her being before its birth, and the very shadow of death hung over her at the time the little new life began.

Lillie's mother, now a widow, was sent for, and by this event installed as a fixture in her daughter's dwelling; and for weeks the sympathies of all the neighborhood were concentrated upon the sufferer. Flowers and fruits were left daily at the door. Every one was forward in offering those kindly attentions which spring up so gracefully in rural neighborhoods. Everybody was interested for her. She was little and pretty and suffering; and people even

forgot to blame her for the levities that had made her present trial more severe. As to John, he watched over her day and night with anxious assiduity, forgetting every fault and foible. She was now more than the wife of his youth; she was the mother of his child, enthroned and glorified in his eyes by the wonderful and mysterious experiences which had given this new little treasure to their dwelling.

To say the truth, Lillie was too sick and suffering for sentiment. It requires a certain amount of bodily strength and soundness to feel emotions of love; and for a long time the little Lillie had to be banished from the mother's apartment, as she lay weary in her darkened room, with only a consciousness of a varied succession of disagreeables and discomforts. Her general impression about herself was that she was a much abused and most unfortunate woman; and that all that could ever be done by the utmost devotion of everybody in the house was insufficient to make up for such trials as had come upon her.

A nursing mother was found for the little Lillie in the person of a goodly Irishwoman, fair, fat, and loving; and the real mother had none of those awakening influences, from the resting of the little head in her bosom, and the pressure of the little helpless fingers, which magnetize into existence the blessed power of love. She had wasted in years of fashionable folly, and in a life led only for excitement and self-gratification, all the womanly power, all the capability of motherly giving and motherly loving, that are the glory of womanhood. Kathleen, the white-armed, the gentle-bosomed, had all the simple pleasures, the tendernesses, the poetry of motherhood; while poor, faded, fretful Lillie had all the prose — the sad, hard, weary prose — of sickness and pain, unglorified by love.

John did not well know what to do with himself in Lillie's darkened room; where it seemed to him he was

always in the way, always doing something wrong; where his feet always seemed too large and heavy, and his voice too loud; and where he was sure, in his anxious desire to be still and gentle, to upset something, or bring about some general catastrophe, and to go out feeling more like a criminal than ever. The mother and the nurse, stationed there like a pair of chief mourners, spoke in tones which experienced feminine experts seem to keep for occasions like these, and which, as Hawthorne has said, give an effect as if the voice had been dyed black. It was a comfort and relief to pass from the funeral gloom to the little pink-ruffled chamber among the cherry-trees, where the birds were singing and the summer breezes blowing, and the pretty Kathleen was crooning her Irish songs, and invoking the holy Virgin and all the saints to bless the "darlin'" baby.

"An' it 's a blessin' they brings wid 'em to a house, sir; the angels comes down wid 'em. We can't see 'em, sir; but, bless the darlin', she can. And she smiles in her sleep when she sees 'em."

Rose and Grace came often to this bower with kisses and gifts and offerings, like a pair of nice fairy godmothers. They hung over the pretty little waxen miracle as she opened her great blue eyes with a silent, mysterious wonder; but, alas, all these delicious moments, this artless love of the new baby life, were not for the mother. She was not strong enough to enjoy it. Its cries made her nervous; and so she kept the uncheered solitude of her room without the blessing of the little angel.

People may mourn in lugubrious phrase about the Irish blood in our country. For our own part, we think the rich, tender, motherly nature of the Irish girl an element a thousand times more hopeful in our population than the faded, washed-out indifferentism of fashionable women, who have danced and flirted away all their womanly attri-

butes, till there is neither warmth nor richness nor maternal fullness left in them, — mere paper-dolls, without milk in their bosoms or blood in their veins. Give us rich, tender, warm-hearted Bridgets and Kathleens, whose instincts teach them the real poetry of motherhood; who can love unto death, and bear trials and pains cheerfully for the joy that is set before them. We are not afraid for the republican citizens that such mothers will bear to us. They are the ones that will come to high places in our land, and that will possess the earth by right of the strongest.

Motherhood, to the woman who has lived only to be petted, and to be herself the centre of all things, is a virtual dethronement. Something weaker, fairer, more delicate than herself comes, — something for her to serve and to care for more than herself. It would sometimes seem as if motherhood were a lovely artifice of the great Father, to wean the heart from selfishness by a peaceful and gradual process. The babe is self in another form. It is so interwoven and identified with the mother's life, that she passes by almost insensible gradations from herself to it; and day by day the distinctive love of self wanes as the child-love waxes, filling the heart with a thousand new springs of tenderness.

But that this benignant transformation of nature may be perfected, it must be wrought out in nature's own way. Any artificial arrangement that takes the child away from the mother interrupts that wonderful system of contrivances whereby the mother's nature and being shade off into that of the child, and her heart enlarges to a new and heavenly power of loving.

When Lillie was sufficiently recovered to be fond of anything, she found in her lovely baby only a new toy, — a source of pride and pleasure, and a charming occasion for the display of new devices of millinery. But she found

Newport indispensable that summer to the reëstablishment of her strength. "And really," she said, "the baby would be so much better off quietly at home with mamma and Kathleen. The fact is," she said, "she quite disregards me. She cries after Kathleen if I take her; so that it 's quite provoking."

And so Lillie, free and unencumbered, had her gay season at Newport with the Follingsbees, and the Simpkinses, and the Tompkinses, and all the rest of the nice people, who have nothing to do but enjoy themselves; and everybody flattered her by being incredulous that one so young and charming could possibly be a mother.

CHAPTER XXVII

CHECKMATE

If ever our readers have observed two chess-players, both ardent, skillful, determined, who have been carrying on noiselessly the moves of a game, they will understand the full significance of this decisive term. Up to this point, there is hope, there is energy, there is enthusiasm; the pieces are marshaled and managed with good courage. At last, perhaps in an unexpected moment, one, two, three adverse moves follow each other, and the decisive word, "checkmate," is uttered.

This is a symbol of what often goes on in the game of life. Here is a man going on, indefinitely, conscious in his own heart that he is not happy in his domestic relations. There is a want of union between him and his wife. She is not the woman that meets his wants or his desires; and in the intercourse of life they constantly cross and annoy each other. But still he does not allow himself to look the matter fully in the face. He goes on and on, hoping that to-morrow will bring something better than to-day, — hoping that this thing or that thing or the other thing will bring a change, and that in some indefinite future all will round and fashion itself to his desires. It is very slowly that a man awakens from the illusions of his first love. It is very unwillingly that he ever comes to the final conclusion that he has made *there* the mistake of a whole lifetime, and that the woman to whom he gave his whole heart not only is not the woman that he supposed her to be, but never in any future time, nor by any

change of circumstances, will become that woman, — that the difficulty is radical and final and hopeless.

In the "Pilgrim's Progress" we read that the poor man, Christian, tried to persuade his wife to go with him on the pilgrimage to the celestial city; but that finally he had to make up his mind to go alone without her. Such is the lot of the man who is brought to the conclusion, positively and definitely, that his wife is always to be a hindrance, and never a help to him, in any upward aspiration; that whatever he does that is needful and right and true must be done, not by her influence, but in spite of it; that if he has to swim against the hard, upward current of the river of life, he must do so with her hanging on his arm, and holding him back, and that he cannot influence and cannot control her.

Such hours of disclosure to a man are among the terrible hidden tragedies of life, — tragedies such as are never acted on the stage. Such a time of disclosure came to John the year after Grace's marriage; and it came in this way: The Spindlewood property had long been critically situated. Sundry financial changes which were going on in the country had depreciated its profits and affected it unfavorably. All now depended upon the permanency of one commercial house. John had been passing through an interval of great anxiety. He could not tell Lillie his trouble. He had been for months past nervously watching all the incomings and outgoings of his family, arranged on a scale of reckless expenditure, which he felt entirely powerless to control. Lillie's wishes were importunate. She was nervous and hysterical, wholly incapable of listening to reason; and the least attempt to bring her to change any of her arrangements, or to restrict any of her pleasures, brought tears and faintings and distresses and scenes of domestic confusion which he shrank from. He often tried to set before her the possibility that they might be

obliged, for a time at least, to live in a different manner; but she always resisted every such supposition as so frightful, so dreadful, that he was utterly discouraged, and put off and off, hoping that the evil day never might arrive.

But it did come at last. One morning, when he received by mail the tidings of the failure of the great house of Clapham & Co., he knew that the time had come when the thing could no longer be staved off. He was an indorser to a large amount on the paper of this house, and the crisis was inevitable. It was inevitable also that he must acquaint Lillie with the state of his circumstances; for she was going on with large arrangements and calculations for a Newport campaign, and sending the usual orders to New York, to her milliner and dressmaker, for her summer outfit. It was a cruel thing for him to be obliged to interrupt all this; for she seemed perfectly cheerful and happy in it, as she always was when preparing to go on a pleasure-seeking expedition. But it could not be. All this luxury and indulgence must be cut off at a stroke. He must tell her that she could not go to Newport; that there was no money for new dresses or new finery; that they should probably be obliged to move out of their elegant house, and take a smaller one, and practice for some time a rigid economy.

John came into Lillie's elegant apartments, which glittered like a tulip-bed with many colored sashes and ribbons, with sheeny silks and misty laces, laid out in order to be surveyed before packing.

"Gracious me, John! what on earth is the matter with you to-day? How perfectly awful and solemn you do look!"

"I have had bad news, this morning, Lillie, which I must tell you."

"Oh, dear me, John! what is the matter? Nobody is dead, I hope!"

"No, Lillie; but I am afraid you will have to give up your Newport journey."

"Gracious, goodness, John! what for?"

"To say the truth, Lillie, I cannot afford it."

"Can't afford it? Why not? Why, John, what is the matter?"

"Well, Lillie, just read this letter!"

Lillie took it, and read it with her hands trembling. "Well, dear me, John! I don't see anything in this letter. If they have failed, I don't see what that is to you!"

"But, Lillie, I am indorser for them."

"How very silly of you, John! What made you indorse for them? Now that is too bad; it just makes me perfectly miserable to think of such things. I know *I* should not have done so; but I don't see why you need pay it. It is their business, anyhow."

"But, Lillie, I shall have to pay it. It is a matter of honor and honesty to do it; because I engaged to do it."

"Well, I don't see why that should be! It is n't your debt; it is their debt: and why need you do it? I am sure Dick Follingsbee said that there were ways in which people could put their property out of their hands when they got caught in such scrapes as this. Dick knows just how to manage. He told me of plenty of people that had done that, who were living splendidly, and who were received everywhere; and people thought just as much of them."

"Oh, Lillie, Lillie! my child," said John; "you don't know anything of what you are talking about! That would be dishonorable and wholly out of the question. No, Lillie dear, the fact is," he said, with a great gulp and a deep sigh, — "the fact is, I have failed; but I am going to fail honestly. If I have nothing else left, I will have my honor and my conscience. But we shall have to

give up this house, and move into a smaller one. Everything will have to be given up to the creditors to settle the business. And then, when all is arranged, we must try to live economically some way; and perhaps we can make it up again. But you see, dear, there can be no more of this kind of expenses at present," he said, pointing to the dresses and jewelry on the bed.

"Well, John, I am sure I had rather die!" said Lillie, gathering herself into a little white heap, and tumbling into the middle of the bed. "I am sure if we have got to rub and scrub and starve so, I had rather die and done with it; and I hope I shall."

John crossed his arms, and looked gloomily out of the window. "Perhaps you had better," he said. "I am sure I should be glad to."

"Yes, I dare say!" said Lillie; "that is all you care for me. Now there is Dick Follingsbee, he would be taking care of his wife. Why, he has failed three or four times, and always come out richer than he was before!"

"He is a swindler and a rascal!" said John; "that is what he is."

"I don't care if he is," said Lillie, sobbing. "His wife has good times, and goes into the very first society in New York. People don't care, so long as you are rich, what you do. Well, I am sure I can't do anything about it. I don't know how to live without money, — that's a fact! and I can't learn. I suppose you would be glad to see me rubbing around in old calico dresses, would n't you? and keeping only one girl, and going into the kitchen, like Miss Dotty Peabody? I think I see myself! And all just for one of your Quixotic notions, when you might just as well keep all your money as not. That is what it is to marry a reformer! I never have had any peace of my life on account of your conscience, always something or other turning up that you can't act like anybody else. I should

think, at least, you might have contrived to settle this place on me and poor little Lillie, that we might have a house to put our heads in."

"Lillie, Lillie," said John, "this is too much! Don't you think that *I* suffer at all?"

"I don't see that you do," said Lillie, sobbing. "I dare say you are glad of it; it is just like you. Oh, dear, I wish I had never been married!"

"I *certainly* do," said John fervently.

"I suppose so. You see, it is nothing to you men; you don't care anything about these things. If you can get a musty old corner and your books, you are perfectly satisfied; and you don't know when things are pretty and when they are not: and so you can talk grand about your honor and your conscience and all that. I suppose the carriages and horses have got to be sold too?"

"Certainly, Lillie," said John, hardening his heart and his tone.

"Well, well," she said, "I wish you would go now and send ma to me. I don't want to talk about it any more. My head aches as if it would split. Poor ma! She little thought when I married you that it was going to come to this."

John walked out of the room gloomily enough. He had received this morning his checkmate. All illusion was at an end. The woman that he had loved and idolized and caressed and petted and indulged, in whom he had been daily and hourly disappointed since he was married, but of whom he still hoped and hoped, he now felt was of a nature not only unlike, but opposed to his own. He felt that he could neither love nor respect her further. And yet she was his wife, and the mother of his daughter, and the only queen of his household; and he had solemnly promised at God's altar that "forsaking all others, he would keep only unto her, so long as they both should

live, for better, for worse," John muttered to himself, — "for better, for worse. This is the worse; and oh, it is dreadful!"

In all John's hours of sorrow and trouble, the instinctive feeling of his heart was to go back to the memory of his mother; and the nearest to his mother was his sister Grace. In this hour of his blind sorrow he walked directly over to the little cottage on Elm Street, which Grace and her husband had made a perfectly ideal home.

When he came into the parlor, Grace and Rose were sitting together with an open letter lying between them. It was evident that some crisis of tender confidence had passed between them; for the tears were hardly dry on Rose's cheeks. Yet it was not painful, whatever it was; for her face was radiant with smiles, and John thought he had never seen her look so lovely. At this moment the truth of her beautiful and lovely womanhood, her sweetness and nobleness of nature, came over him, in bitter contrast with the scene he had just passed through, and the woman he had left.

"What do you think, John?" said Grace; "we have some congratulations here to give! Rose is engaged to Harry Endicott."

"Indeed!" said John, "I wish her joy."

"But what is the matter, John?" said both women, looking up, and seeing something unusual in his face.

"Oh, trouble!" said John, — "trouble upon us all. Gracie and Rose, the Spindlewood Mills have failed."

"Is it possible?" was the exclamation of both.

"Yes, indeed!" said John; "you see, the thing has been running very close for the last six months; and the manufacturing business has been looking darker and darker. But still we could have stood it if the house of Clapham & Co. had stood; but they have gone to smash, Gracie. I had a letter this morning, telling me of it."

Both women stood a moment as if aghast; for the Ferguson property was equally involved.

"Poor papa!" said Rose; "this will come hard on him."

"I know it," said John bitterly. "It is more for others that I feel than for myself, — for all that are involved must suffer with me."

"But, after all, John dear," said Rose, "don't feel so about us at any rate. We shall do very well. People that fail honorably always come right side up at last; and, John, how good it is to think, whatever you lose, you cannot lose your best treasure, — your true noble heart and your true friends. I feel this minute that we shall all know each other better, and be more precious to each other for this very trouble."

John looked at her through his tears.

"Dear Rose," he said, "you are an angel; and from my soul I congratulate the man that has got *you*. He that has you would be rich if he lost the whole world."

"You are too good to me, all of you," said Rose. "But now, John, about that bad news — let me break it to papa and mamma; I think I can do it best. I know when they feel brightest in the day; and I don't want it to come on them suddenly: but I can put it in the very best way. How fortunate that I am just engaged to Harry! Harry is a perfect prince in generosity. You don't know what a good heart he has; and it happens so fortunately that we have him to lean on just now. Oh, I 'm sure we shall find a way out of these troubles, never fear." And Rose took the letter, and left John and Grace together.

"Oh, Gracie, Gracie!" said John, throwing himself down on the old chintz sofa, and burying his face in his hands, "what a woman there is! Oh, Gracie! I wish I was dead! Life is played out with me. I have n't the least desire to live. I can't get a step farther."

"Oh, John, John! don't talk so!" said Grace, stooping over him. "Why, you will recover from this! You are young and strong. It will be settled; and you can work your way up again."

"It is not the money, Grace; I could let that go. It is that I have nothing to live for, — nobody and nothing. My wife, Gracie! she is worse than nothing, — worse, oh! infinitely worse than nothing! She is a chain and a shackle. She is my obstacle. She tortures me and hinders me every way and everywhere. There will never be a home for me where she is; and because she is there, no other woman can make a home for me. Oh, I wish she would go away, and stay away! I would not care if I never saw her face again."

There was something shocking and terrible to Grace about this outpouring. It was dreadful to her to be the recipient of such a confidence, to hear these words spoken, and to more than suspect their truth. She was quite silent for a few moments, as John still lay with his face down, buried in the sofa-pillow.

Then she went to her writing-desk, took out a little ivory miniature of their mother, came and sat down by him, and laid her hand on his head.

"John," she said, "look at this."

He raised his head, took it from her hand, and looked at it. Soon she saw the tears dropping over it.

"John," she said, "let me say to you now what I think our mother would have said. The great object of life is not happiness; and when we have lost our own personal happiness, we have not lost all that life is worth living for. No, John, the very best of life often lies beyond that. When we have learned to let ourselves go, then we may find that there is a better, a nobler, and a truer life for us."

"I *have* given up," said John in a husky voice. "I have lost *all*."

"Yes," replied Grace steadily, "I know perfectly well that there is very little hope of personal and individual happiness for you in your marriage for years to come. Instead of a companion, a friend, and a helper, you have a moral invalid to take care of. But, John, if Lillie had been stricken with blindness or insanity or paralysis, you would not have shrunk from your duty to her; and because the blindness and paralysis are moral, you will not shrink from it, will you? You sacrifice all your property to pay an indorsement for a debt that is not yours; and why do you do it? Because society rests on every man's faithfulness to his engagements. John, if you stand by a business engagement with this faithfulness, how much more should you stand by that great engagement which concerns all other families and the stability of all society. Lillie is your wife. You were free to choose; and you chose her. She is the mother of your child; and, John, what that daughter is to be depends very much on the steadiness with which you fulfill your duties to the mother. I know that Lillie is a most undeveloped and uncongenial person; I know how little you have in common; but your duties are the same as if she were the best and the most congenial of wives. It is every man's duty to make the best of his marriage."

"But, Gracie," said John, "is there anything to be made of her?"

"You will never make me believe, John, that there are any human beings absolutely without the capability of good. They may be very dark, and very slow to learn, and very far from it; but steady patience and love and well-doing will at last tell upon any one."

"But, Gracie, if you could have heard how utterly without principle she is: urging me to put my property out of my hands dishonestly, to keep her in luxury!"

"Well, John, you must have patience with her. Con-

sider that she has been unfortunate in her associates. Consider that she has been a petted child all her life, and that you have helped to pet her. Consider how much your sex always do to weaken the moral sense of women, by liking and admiring them for being weak and foolish and inconsequent, so long as it is pretty and does not come in your way. I do not mean you in particular, John; but I mean that the general course of society releases pretty women from any sense of obligation to be constant in duty, or brave in meeting emergencies. You yourself have encouraged Lillie to live very much like a little humming-bird."

"Well, I thought," said John, "that she would in time develop into something better."

"Well, there lies your mistake; you expected too much. The work of years is not to be undone in a moment; and you must take into account that this is Lillie's first adversity. You may as well make up your mind not to expect her to be reasonable. It seems to me that we can make up our minds to bear anything that we know must come; and you may as well make up yours, that, for a long time, you will have to carry Lillie as a burden. But then, you must think that she is your daughter's mother, and that it is very important for the child that she should respect and honor her mother. You must treat her with respect and honor, even in her weaknesses. We all must. We all must help Lillie as we can to bear this trial, and sympathize with her in it, unreasonable as she may seem; because, after all, John, it is a real trial to her."

"I cannot see, for my part," said John, "that she loves anything."

"The power of loving may be undeveloped in her, John; but it will come, perhaps, later in life. At all events, take this comfort to yourself, — that when you are doing your duty by your wife, when you are holding

her in her place in the family, and teaching her child to respect and honor her, you are putting her in God's school of love. If we contend with and fly from our duties, simply because they gall us and burden us, we go against everything; but if we take them up bravely, then everything goes with us. God and good angels and good men and all good influences are working with us when we are working for the right. And in this way, John, you may come to happiness; or if you do not come to personal happiness, you may come to something higher and better. You know that you think it nobler to be an honest man than a rich man; and I am sure that you will think it better to be a good man than to be a happy one. Now, dear John, it is not I that say these things, I think; but it seems to me it is what our mother would say, if she should speak to you from where she is. And then, dear brother, it will all be over soon, this life-battle; and the only thing is, to come out victorious."

"Gracie, you are right," said John, rising up: "I see it myself. I will brace up to my duty. Could n't you try and pacify Lillie a little, poor girl? I suppose I have been rough with her."

"Oh yes, John, I will go up and talk with Lillie, and condole with her; and perhaps we shall bring her round. And then when my husband comes home next week, we 'll have a family palaver, and he will find some ways and means of setting this business straight, that it won't be so bad as it looks now. There may be arrangements made when the creditors come together. My impression is that, whenever people find a man really determined to arrange a matter of this kind honorably, they are all disposed to help him; so don't be cast down about the business. As for Lillie's discontent, treat it as you would the crying of your little daughter for its sugar-plums, and do not expect anything more of her just now than there is."

. . . . . .

We have brought our story up to this point. We informed our readers in the beginning that it was not a novel, but a story with a moral; and as people pick all sorts of strange morals out of stories, we intend to put conspicuously into our story exactly what the moral of it is.

Well, then, it has been very surprising to us to see in these our times that some people, who really at heart have the interest of women upon their minds, have been so short-sighted and reckless as to clamor for an easy dissolution of the marriage contract, as a means of righting their wrongs. Is it possible that they do not see that this is a liberty which, once granted, would always tell against the weaker sex? If the woman who finds that she has made a mistake, and married a man unkind or uncongenial, may, on the discovery of it, leave him and seek her fortune with another, so also may a man. And what will become of women like Lillie, when the first gilding begins to wear off, if the man who has taken one of them shall be at liberty to cast her off and seek another? Have we not enough now of miserable, broken-winged butterflies, that sink down, down, down into the mud of the street? But are women reformers going to clamor for having every woman turned out helpless, when the man who has married her, and made her a mother, discovers that she has not the power to interest him, and to help his higher spiritual development? It was because woman is helpless and weak, and because Christ was her great Protector, that he made the law of marriage irrevocable. "Whosoever putteth away his wife causeth her to commit adultery." If the sacredness of the marriage contract did not hold, if the Church and all good men and all good women did not uphold it with their might and main, it is easy to see where the career of many women like Lillie would end. Men have the power to reflect before the choice is made; and that is the only proper time for reflection. But when

once marriage is made and consummated, it should be as fixed a fact as the laws of nature. And they who suffer under its stringency should suffer as those who endure for the public good. "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not, he shall enter into the tabernacle of the Lord."

CHAPTER XXVIII

AFTER THE STORM

THE painful and unfortunate crises of life often arise and darken like a thunderstorm, and seem for the moment perfectly terrific and overwhelming; but wait a little, and the cloud sweeps by, and the earth, which seemed about to be torn to pieces and destroyed, comes out as good as new. Not a bird is dead; not a flower killed; and the sun shines just as it did before. So it was with John's financial trouble. When it came to be investigated and looked into, it proved much less terrible than had been feared. It was not utter ruin. The high character which John bore for honor and probity, the general respect which was felt for him by all to whom he stood indebted, led to an arrangement by which the whole business was put into his hands, and time given him to work it through. His brother-in-law came to his aid, advancing money, and entering into the business with him. Our friend Harry Endicott was only too happy to prove his devotion to Rose by offers of financial assistance. In short, there seemed every reason to hope that, after a period of somewhat close sailing, the property might be brought into clear water again, and go on even better than before.

To say the truth, too, John was really relieved by that terrible burst of confidence in his sister. It is a curious fact, that giving full expression to bitterness of feeling or indignation against one we love seems to be such a relief that it always brings a revulsion of kindliness. John never loved his sister so much as when he heard her plead his

wife's cause with him; for though in some bitter, impatient hour a man may feel, which John did, as if he would be glad to sunder all ties, and tear himself away from an uncongenial wife, yet a good man never can forget the woman that once he loved, and who is the mother of his children. Those sweet, sacred visions and illusions of first love will return again and again, even after disenchantment; and the better and the purer the man is, the more sacred is the appeal to him of woman's weakness. Because he is strong, and she is weak, he feels that it would be unmanly to desert her; and if there ever was anything for which John thanked his sister, it was when she went over and spent hours with his wife, patiently listening to her complainings, and soothing her as if she had been a petted child. All the circle of friends, in a like manner, bore with her for his sake.

Thanks to the intervention of Grace's husband and of Harry, John was not put to the trial and humiliation of being obliged to sell the family place, although constrained to live in it under a system of more rigid economy. Lillie's mother, although quite a commonplace woman as a companion, had been an economist in her day; she had known how to make the most of straitened circumstances, and, being put to it, could do it again.

To be sure, there was an end of Newport gayeties; for Lillie vowed and declared that she would not go to Newport and take cheap board, and live without a carriage. She did n't want the Follingsbees and the Tompkinses and the Simpkinses talking about her, and saying that they had failed. Her mother worked like a servant for her in smartening her up, and tidying her old dresses, of which one would think that she had a stock to last for many years. And thus, with everybody sympathizing with her, and everybody helping her, Lillie subsided into enacting the part of a patient, persecuted saint. She was touch-

ingly resigned, and wore an air of pleasing melancholy. John had asked her pardon for all the hasty words he said to her in the terrible interview; and she had forgiven him with edifying meekness. "Of course," she remarked to her mother, "she knew he would be sorry for the way he had spoken to her; and she was very glad that he had the grace to confess it."

So life went on and on with John. He never forgot his sister's words, but received them into his heart as a message from his mother in heaven. From that time, no one could have judged by any word, look, or action of his that his wife was not what she had always been to him.

Meanwhile Rose was happily married, and settled down in the Ferguson place; where her husband and she formed one family with her parents. It was a pleasant, cosy, social, friendly neighborhood. After all, John found that his cross was not so very heavy to carry, when once he had made up his mind that it must be borne. By never expecting much, he was never disappointed. Having made up his mind that he was to serve and to give without receiving, he did it, and began to find pleasure in it. By and by, the little Lillie, growing up by her mother's side, began to be a compensation for all he had suffered. The little creature inherited her mother's beauty, the dazzling delicacy of her complexion, the abundance of her golden hair; but there had been given to her also her father's magnanimous and generous nature. Lillie was a selfish, exacting mother; and such women often succeed in teaching to their children patience and self-denial. As soon as the little creature could walk, she was her father's constant playfellow and companion. He took her with him everywhere. He was never weary of talking with her and playing with her; and gradually he relieved the mother of all care of her early training. When, in time, two others were added to the nursery troop, Lillie be-

came a perfect model of a gracious, motherly, little older sister.

Did all this patience and devotion of the husband at last awaken anything like love in the wife? Lillie was not naturally rich in emotion. Under the best education and development, she would have been rather wanting in the loving power; and the whole course of her education had been directed to suppress what little she had, and to concentrate all her feelings upon herself.

The factitious and unnatural life she had lived so many years had seriously undermined the stamina of her constitution; and after the birth of her third child her health failed altogether. Lillie thus became in time a chronic invalid, exacting, querulous, full of troubles and wants which tasked the patience of all around her. During all these trying years her husband's faithfulness never faltered. As he gradually retrieved his circumstances, she was first in every calculation. Because he knew that here lay his greatest temptation, here he most rigidly performed his duty. Nothing that money could give to soften the weariness of sickness was withheld; and John was for hours and hours, whenever he could spare the time, himself a personal, assiduous, unwearied attendant in the sick-room.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE NEW LILLIE

We have but one scene more before our story closes. It is night now in Lillie's sick-room, and her mother is anxiously arranging the drapery, to keep the firelight from her eyes, stepping noiselessly about the room. She lies there behind the curtains, on her pillow, — the wreck and remnant only of what was once so beautiful. During all these years, when the interests and pleasures of life have been slowly dropping, leaf by leaf, and passing away like fading flowers, Lillie has learned to do much thinking. It sometimes seems to take a stab, a thrust, a wound, to open in some hearts the capacity of deep feeling and deep thought. There are things taught by suffering that can be taught in no other way. By suffering sometimes is wrought out in a person the power of loving and of appreciating love. During the first year Lillie had often seemed to herself in a sort of wild, chaotic state. The coming in of a strange new spiritual life was something so inexplicable to her that it agitated and distressed her; and sometimes, when she appeared more petulant and fretful than usual, it was only the stir and vibration on her weak nerves of new feelings, which she wanted the power to express. These emotions at first were painful to her. She felt weak, miserable, and good for nothing. It seemed to her that her whole life had been a wretched cheat, and that she had ill repaid the devotion of her husband. At first these thoughts only made her bitter and angry, and she contended against them. But as she sank from day to

day, and grew weaker and weaker, she grew more gentle; and a better spirit seemed to enter into her.

On this evening that we speak of, she had made up her mind that she would try and tell her husband some of the things that were passing in her mind.

"Tell John I want to see him," she said to her mother. "I wish he would come and sit with me."

This was a summons for which John invariably left everything. He laid down his book as the word was brought to him, and soon was treading noiselessly at her bedside.

"Well, Lillie dear," he said, "how are you?"

She put out her little wasted hand. "John dear," she said, "sit down; I have something that I want to say to you. I have been thinking, John, that this can't last much longer."

"What can't last, Lillie?" said John, trying to speak cheerfully.

"I mean, John, that I am going to leave you soon, for good and all; and I should not think you would be sorry either."

"Oh, come, come, my girl, it won't do to talk so!" said John, patting her hand. "You must not be blue."

"And so, John," said Lillie, going on without noticing this interruption, "I wanted just to tell you, before I got any weaker, that I know and feel just how patient and noble and good you have always been to me."

"Oh, Lillie darling!" said John, "why should n't I be? Poor little girl, how much you have suffered!"

"Well, now, John, I know perfectly well that I have never been the wife that I ought to be to you. You know it too; so don't try to say anything about it. I was never the woman to have made you happy; and it was not fair in me to marry you. I have lived a dreadfully worldly, selfish life. And now, John, I am come to the end. You

dear good man, your trials with me are almost over; but I want you to know that you really have succeeded. John, I do love you now with all my heart, though I did not love you when I married you. And, John, I do feel that God will take pity on me, poor and good for nothing as I am, just because I see how patient and kind you have always been to me when I have been so very provoking. You see it has made me think how good God must be, — because, dear, we know that he is better than the best of us."

"Oh, Lillie, Lillie!" said John, leaning over her and taking her in his arms, "do live, I want you to live. Don't leave me now, now that you really love me!"

"Oh no, John! it is best as it is, — I think I should not have strength to be *very* good if I were to get well, and you would still have your little cross to carry. No, dear, it is all right. And, John, you will have the best of me in our Lillie. She looks like me; but, John, she has your good heart; and she will be more to you than I could be. She is just as sweet and unselfish as I *was* selfish. I don't think I am quite so bad now; and I think, if I lived, I should try to be a great deal better."

"Oh, Lillie! I cannot bear to part with you! I never have ceased to love you, and I never have loved any other woman."

"I know that, John. Oh! how much truer and better you are than I have been! But I like to think that you love me, — I like to think that you will be sorry when I am gone, bad as I am, or *was;* for I insist on it that I am a little better than I was. You remember that story of Undine you read me one day? It seems as if most of my life I have been like Undine before her soul came into her. But this last year I have felt the coming in of a soul. It has troubled me; it has come with a strange kind of pain. I have never suffered so much. But it has done

me good — it has made me feel that I have an immortal soul, and that you and I, John, shall meet in some better place hereafter. And there you will be rewarded for all your goodness to me."

As John sat there, and held the little frail hand, his thoughts went back to the time when the wild impulse of his heart had been to break away from this woman, and never see her face again; and he gave thanks to God, who had led him in a better way.

. . . . . .

And so, at last, passed away the little story of Lillie's life. But in the home which she has left now grows another Lillie, fairer and sweeter than she, — the tender confidante, the trusted friend of her father. And often, when he lays his hand on her golden head, he says, "Dear child, how like your mother you look!"

Of all that was painful in that experience nothing now remains. John thinks of her only as he thought of her in the fair illusion of first love, — the dearest and most sacred of all illusions. The Lillie who guides his household, and is so motherly to the younger children; who shares every thought of his heart; who enters into every feeling and sympathy, — she is the pure reward of his faithfulness and constancy. She is a sacred and saintly Lillie, springing out of the sod where he laid her mother, forgetting all her faults forever.

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